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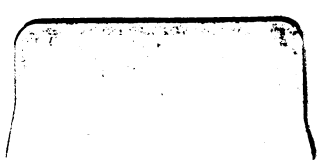

Smith
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MONTALBERT.

A NOVEL.

VOL. II.

MONTALBERT.

A NOVEL.

BY CHARLOTTE SMITH.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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ERRATA—VOL. II.

Page	Line	
4	5	for communicated, r. communicating.
22	3	— I have often, r. I often went.
24	15	after 'converſation' put a ſemi-colon, after 'ended' eraſe a comma.
34	7	— only, r. even.
36	5	— haſten, r. haſtened.
46	10	— pointed, r. point.
51	11	— inarticulate, r. articulate.
54	7	'cried I' to be in a parentheſis, after Ormſby a note of interrogation.
86	13	— well, in, r. well ſay in.
134	9	— Prince of, r. Count.
135	8	— Anglais, r. Anglaiſe.
146	11	— that ever, r. as ever.
ibid	24	inſert 'Faro of Meſſina.'
147	4	— eſculean, r. cerulean.
148	7	— enchanted, r. enchanting.
174	14	— ſee, and, r. ſee him, and.
188	10	after 'ſuch a time' put dots to mark that the ſentence is broken.
196	4	after 'reſt' a comma.
199	5	— create his, r. create in his.
214	15	— carlinoes, r. carlini.
252	10	after 'without' a comma.'

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MONTALBERT.

CHAPTER XIII.

ROSALIE now ſaw the beloved parent, whom ſhe yet dared not own, every day; and the diſcovery of her marriage with Montalbert, which ſhe had ſo much dreaded, had been the means of procuring her the knowledge of the bleſſing ſhe poſſeſſed in a mother, who now ſecretly indulged all the tenderneſs of her heart. The eldeſt Miſs Vyvian, now Mrs. Boſworth, was ſtill at the family ſeat of her huſband with her ſiſter, and her father

was gone into the north during the receſs of parliament; no impediment, therefore, exiſted at preſent againſt Roſalie's paſſing almoſt all her time with Mrs. Vyvian, and ſo happy did this indulgence make her, that, had Montalbert been in England, ſhe would hardly have had a wiſh left ungratified.

It was now indeed that ſuch a friend was more neceſſary to her than ever, and it was more requiſite that this dear friend ſhould know ſhe was a wife, ſince ſhe found it was probable ſhe ſhould become a mother. Nothing was more immediately preſſing than that Montalbert ſhould be informed of this; but without the concurrence of Mrs. Vyvian, and indeed without her aſſiſtance, ſhe dared not hazard a letter, which, if it fell into the hands of his mother, might be of the moſt fatal conſequence. The two letters ſhe had received from Montalbert were but too expreſſive of his deſpondence and uneaſineſs; and though he ſeemed to ſtifle part of the anguiſh of his heart from tenderneſs

tenderneſs towards his wife, ſhe ſaw that the reception his mother had given him was far from having been pleaſant, and that, while he yet acknowledged the neceſſity of his journey, he regretted that he had made it.

But Mrs. Vyvian, who had received letters from her ſon, knew yet more: ſhe had learned that one reaſon for the impatience, expreſſed by the mother of Montalbert for his return to Naples, was, that ſhe had projected a marriage for him with the daughter of a friend of her own, who had lately loſt her huſband, a Roman of high rank, and was now a very rich widow. Charles Vyvian related all the advantages offered by ſuch an alliance: on the beauty of the young widow, and her predilection in favour of Montalbert, with whom ſhe had been acquainted before her firſt marriage, he dwelt particularly; but added, laughingly, that he ſuppoſed Harry had left his heart in England, for at preſent he ſeemed as inſenſible to the charms

of the lady, as deaf to the remonſtrances of his mother.

Mrs. Vyvian was extremely diſtreſſed by this intelligence, which ſhe carefully avoided communicated. Though ſhe loved Montalbert extremely, ſhe had many doubts whether in affairs of love he had more honour than other gay young men. She had reaſon formerly to believe his principles were very free, and ſhe could not but fear, that he might conſider his marriage with Roſalie, celebrated as it had been contrary to the laws of England, as an engagement ſo little binding, that he might break it whenever ambition or the love of variety might induce him to it.

The ſituation, therefore, of this beloved child, more dear than ever to her, was a dreadful weight on the ſpirits of Mrs. Vyvian; and ſhe now felt renewed, in the perſon of Roſalie, all thoſe cruel ſenſations which had corroded her own heart, when, betrayed by an unhappy paſſion into great and dangerous imprudence, ſhe was compelled

compelled to undergo all the meanneſs of concealment, and all the terrors of detection. The ſimilarity of their deſtinies hitherto endeared to her mother this lovely unfortunate young woman, who ſeemed too likely to be doubly a victim; yet, circumſtanced as ſhe was herſelf, ſhe could not protect her openly, and even trembled every time ſhe reflected that, with the return of the family of her huſband, the indulgence of ever ſeeing Roſalie muſt be reſigned; and that they muſt equally ſtifle their fears and their affections.

Every day rendered the ſituation of Roſalie more critical. Though Mrs. Leſſington ſeemed, as if by a tacit agreement with Mrs. Vyvian, not to notice the preference Roſalie ſo evidently gave to the latter, and to ſuffer her to act as ſhe pleaſed, others, who ſtill ſuppoſed her a member of the Leſſington family, could not be but ſurpriſed at her aſſociating ſo little with them, nor help remarking, that whenever they did ſee her among them, there was ſomething peculiar in

her manner and appearance. The men, who had admired her beauty, but who had been repulſed by her coldneſs, now diſcovered, as they always do on ſuch occaſions, that the poor girl was in love; and while the elder ladies thought her proud, conceited, and full of airs, ſome of the younger entirely agreed with them, while others, more candid or more ſenſible, pitied her on the ſuppoſition that ſhe had an "unhappy attachment;" or, as the damſels of lower rank would have expreſſed it, "that ſhe was croſſed in love."

Mrs. Vyvian was too deeply intereſted to have a moment's tranquillity; and when the hour of Mrs. Boſworth's return approached, this anxiety became more and more inſupportable: and it was certain that health ſo delicate could not long reſiſt ſuch painful ſolicitude.

After long deliberation and conſulting with the Abbé Hayward, who had long been aware of who Roſalie really was, Mrs. Vyvian determined to write to Montalbert

talbert with the ſame precautions as thoſe Roſalie uſed by his directions. This ſhe executed, not without finding it the moſt difficult and painful taſk ſhe had ever undertaken. To avow the diſſimulation of her whole life to her nephew, to explain to him circumſtances of which ſhe knew he muſt be entirely ignorant, words were not eaſily found. At length, however, the letter was written and ſent off, and ſhe returned once more to her long and penſive conferences with the object of it, with whom alſo a taſk yet remained quite as diſtreſſing to her.

This was to tell Roſalie to whom ſhe owed her birth; to give a relation of circumſtances which ſhe knew muſt appear very ſtrange to her. Mrs. Vyvian ſaw her often look as if ſhe at once dreaded and expected this explanation; but never yet had ſhe acquired courage to begin the converſation, and Roſalie was too timid to make any inquiries that led to it.

But Mrs. Boſworth and Miſs Vyvian would now return in a ſhort time, and

then the mother and daughter muſt no longer indulge themſelves with being together for whole days as they were now—a heavy preſentment of future evil, to which the former was too apt to yield, told her, that if the preſent time was loſt, future opportunities might be wanting.—The next morning, therefore, after having made her reſolution, ſhe put it into execution.

Roſalie, whom ſhe had deſired to come early, was ſeated at work by her bed-ſide, for ſhe was too much indiſpoſed to leave it; when Mrs. Vyvian, opening a little caſket which ſhe had previouſly placed near her pillow, put into the hands of Roſalie a miniature picture, and, in a trembling voice, ſaid, "It is the likeneſs of—your father!"——It repreſented a man of two or three and twenty: the countenance expreſſed underſtanding and vivacity of ſentiment, and the whole figure was remarkably handſome. Roſalie gazed on it in ſilence, and with ſenſations that cannot be deſcribed. "Do you ſee no reſemblance,

blance, my Roſalie, (ſaid Mrs. Vyvian), to a face you know?—Ah! do you not trace in theſe features the likeneſs you bear to----------?—Believe me, my child, (continued ſhe, unable to reſtrain her tears), this morning is the firſt time for many years that I have allowed myſelf to look at that picture, and now I reſign it for ever—take it, my dear girl, and may you not reſemble him in fortune as in features."

"Does my father yet live, Madam?" Roſalie would have ſaid, but ſhe could not articulate the ſentence: her mother, however, underſtood her. "He does, (replied ſhe), but not in England—I ſhall never ſee him more—nor am I guilty or wretched enough to wiſh it.—Never have theſe eyes beheld him ſince that fatal hour when I was compelled to give to another the hand which was his in the ſight of God; but, though my hand was not at my own diſpoſal, never has it acknowledged any ſovereign but him to whom

my firſt vows were given: yet I very ſincerely tried, when under the cruel neceſſity of giving myſelf to Mr. Vyvian, to fulfil the duties that were impoſed upon me. He knew that I was compelled to marry him—he was indelicate and ſelfiſh enough to conſider only the convenience of my fortune, and a perſon, which was then an object to a man, licentious and diſſolute as he was: yet I *think* he never has had any juſt reaſon to complain of my conduct ſince I have borne the name of his wife. He knew I neither did nor ever could love him—for I told him ſo when I married him. He was contented to poſſeſs my fortune and my perſon—my heart he never thought worth the experiment that ſome men would have made to have gained it." A deep ſigh and a long pauſe, which Roſalie did not interrupt, now followed.——

In a few moments Mrs. Vyvian ſeemed to have regained her reſolution, and thus proceeded——

"You

"You ſhould have an idea of what ſort of a man, my father, Mr. Montalbert, was, before you can imagine how I was ſituated. I do not believe you know more than his name; for Mrs. Leſſington was probably cautious of entering into any part of my unfortunate hiſtory.——Mr. Montalbert then, my father, was the elder brother of a family, which, from its name, was evidently of Norman extraction—a boaſt that is generally deemed a ſufficient ground for the pride of anceſtry in England. The Montalberts, however, could carry their genealogy much farther, and were content to begin it only among the Emperors of the Eaſt. As Engliſh Peers, they adhered to the unfortunate James the Second, were baniſhed with him, and loſt their property, their title, and their rights as Britiſh ſubjects. My father, being much connected with noble familes more fortunate, had intereſt enough to obtain reſtitution of a ſmall part indeed of the great fortunes of his family, but ſufficient to give him once more a footing in Eng-

land, where he was happy enough to marry one of its richeſt heireſſes. My mother, who was the only offspring of an alliance between two noble houſes, inherited all their poſſeſſions, and gave them and herſelf to my father, in deſpite of the oppoſition of ſuch of her family as pretended to any right of giving their opinion; for her father and mother being dead, there were only uncles or couſins whoſe diſſent could not prevent her following her own inclinations.

" This great property was divided between me and my brother, the father of Montalbert, your huſband, but not equally; for he had of courſe the greateſt ſhare. The noble caſtle and the eſtates, belonging to it in the north, are the principal part of what remains to him in England; for having early formed connections upon the continent, he never loved or lived long in England: his life was not long, for he died ſoon after the birth of your huſband; ſo ſoon, indeed, that he had neglected to make for him the proviſion he ought to have

have made, and, by a prior will, Harry Montalbert was left almoſt entirely dependent on his mother.

" In conſequence of the long abſences, and afterwards of the early death of my brother, I came to be conſidered by my father as an only child. Diſſatisfied with a world, which he had, from perſonal infirmities, no longer the power of enjoying, he retired to Holmwood when I was about fifteen, and, from that time, you may imagine my life was very recluſe, for then the country around it was leſs inhabited, and the roads leſs paſſable than they are now.

" Harſh as my father was, I loved him very tenderly, and therefore did not murmur at the confinement thus impoſed upon me at a time of life when other young women enter the world and enjoy its pleaſures: nor did the fatigues of conſtant attendance in a ſick chamber, and continuing to read ſometimes for half the night, for a moment deter me from doing my

my duty, or for a moment induce me to repine.

"I have ſince thought, Roſalie, that this period, with all its little hardſhips and inconveniences, was the happieſt of my life.—My friend Mrs. Leſſington, though then married, and ſome years older than me, was ſtill often my companion, and ſhared a taſk which without her I could not have executed ſo well. Whenever I was releaſed from the chamber of my ſuffering parent, I ſaw around me ſcenes of nature, which ſeemed to put on new beauties as if to reward me for my perſeverance in painful duties; and if I taſted not of pleaſures which are accounted happineſs by very young women, I was at leaſt content. Thus, without much variation, paſſed more than three years of my life.

"My father had a relation in Ireland, whoſe anceſtors having ſuffered in the ſame cauſe as that in which the Montalberts had loſt their property, had not been ſo fortunate

tunate in re-eſtabliſhing their affairs; but their deſcendant was, with a numerous family, obliged to live on a very ſmall eſtate, and in great obſcurity in the north of Ireland.

" One of the ſons, however, having been ſent young to the Eaſt Indies, had done ſo well, that he wrote to have *two* of his three brothers follow him, informing his father, that though he could not make remittances for the purpoſe of fitting them out, he was ſure when they arrived there of getting them into ſituations nearly as advantageous as his own.

" In conſequence of this, their father ſent his third and fourth ſons to England, to ſolicit among their friends and their relations the means of equipping them in ſuch a way as might enable them to avail themſelves of theſe advantageous proſpects. The eldeſt of the two ſoon found ſufficient aſſiſtance in London, and departed; but the younger having been

ſeized

ſeized with a violent fit of illneſs in London, was under the neceſſity of ſeeing the laſt ſhip of the ſeaſon ſail without him, and at the invitation of my father, who had taken moſt of the expence of his equipment upon himſelf, he came down to Holmwood to recover his health, while he waited for an opportunity of following his brother, which was not likely to offer for ſome months.

"Ormſby was about one and twenty when he was thus received into the houſe of my father, who ſoon learned to conſider him as a ſon; becoming ſo attached to him, that he was not eaſy in his abſence.

"Even at this diſtance of time, I reflect with wonder on the careleſſneſs with which my father ſuffered two very young people to be continually together, without appearing to think of the probability there was that they might form an attachment to each other. It is true that I have myſelf

myſelf diſcovered inattention of the ſame ſort in regard to you and Montalbert; but beſides the prepoſſeſſion of your predilection in favour of Vyvian, with which my mind was diſtracted, the character of Montalbert was ſo different from that of Ormſby, that it never occurred to me that there was equal hazard in your being continually in his company."———

Mrs. Vyvian now ſeemed to be ſo much fatigued, and to be ſo little able to continue a narrative ſo affecting to her ſpirits, that Roſalie entreated her to forbear concluding it till ſhe was leſs likely to ſuffer by dwelling on ſcenes which it gave her ſo much pain to recal; but the probability that their long and private conferences might be leſs frequent when they were continually liable to be broken in upon by Mrs. Boſworth and her ſiſter, and the neceſſity there was that Roſalie ſhould know the circumſtances of her birth, and what were Mrs. Vyvian's wiſhes as to

her

her future conduct, determined her, to exert herſelf to the utmoſt of her power, to conclude all ſhe had to relate—the ſingular circumſtances of her former life.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIV.

IN the evening Mrs. Vyvian found herſelf able to proceed, and thus continued her narrative:——

"My friend Mrs. Leffington, who had now a family of children, was no longer at liberty to give me ſo much of her time as ſhe had hitherto done; but, at this period, the living of Mayfield, which was in my father's gift, becoming vacant, I was fortunate enough to procure it for her huſband, and had the comfort of ſeeing her ſettled within four miles of Holmwood.

"Greatly, indeed, had I need of the prudence and ſteadineſs of a friend..... Imagine, my Roſalie, how I was at this time ſituated. Ormſby, though he lived ſo much with me, was yet ſo ſenſible of the

the diſtance fortune had placed between us, that for many months after he became an inmate in our houſe he never breathed the moſt diſtant expreſſion of his affection; yet, young as I was, I could not miſtake the meaning of his looks, and thoſe ſilent attentions he inceſſantly paid me. He *ſeemed*—ah! he *was*—too artleſs to diſguiſe entirely his ſentiments; but the ineffectual ſtruggle he made to do ſo was a ſpectacle infinitely more dangerous for me than the warmeſt profeſſions could have been: he had even the generoſity to avoid me for ſome time, and, as if by tacit conſent, we met only in my father's room, where he now almoſt always ſupplied my place, and ſat whole days, and often whole nights, with a tenderneſs and patience that, in my opinion, overpaid the debt of gratitude which he owed him. But ſometimes, when my father's old ſervant was able to give that attendance for which he was often diſqualified by illneſs, Ormſby was unexpectedly releaſed; and it was at one of theſe periods that the explanation was

brought

brought on, which afterwards coſt me ſo dear.

" My father had been extremely ill for many days. It was ſpring, a ſeaſon that always brought on the moſt painful paroxyſms of the gout: his old ſervant, hardly leſs a victim to this diſeaſe than himſelf, had been laid up, and Ormſby had been my father's attendant for ten days, almoſt without taking off his clothes, and certainly without having had any interval of reſt.

" Barford, my father's ſervant, having a little recovered, came down to his relief, for no other perſon was ſuffered to enter the room but Ormſby, myſelf, and this man.

" As at this time Ormſby was ſo much fatigued, that he could hardly ſupport himſelf, he haſtened to procure what refreſhment a change of clothes afforded, and then to relieve a violent head-ache, the effect of want of ſleep, he wandered into the garden for the air.....

You

You remember, Roſalie, the temple at the end of the avenue of ſtone pines—thither I have often went with my work, or with a book, when I was alone; behind it is, you recollect, a copſe, which at the ſeaſon of the year now preſent, for it was the middle of May, echoed with the muſic of innumerable birds. Every object breathed of peace and beauty; and as *my* heart had long ſince learned to aſſociate the idea of Ormſby with every ſcene that gave me pleaſure, I was meditating on future poſſibilities of happineſs, when the object of my dangerous contemplations ſuddenly appeared coming towards the place where I ſat.

"To the lively intereſt he always inſpired was now added, that which aroſe from the fatigue he had evidently undergone. He was pale and his eyes were heavy for want of reſt. I ſaw him with a ſlow and languid ſtep aſcend the little turf hill on which the temple is ſituated: I could not have eſcaped from it without his

his ſeeing me, if I had wiſhed to have done ſo; but, in truth, I had no deſire to fly from him; and though I trembled as he approached me, it was with a ſort of delightful apprehenſion, for I fancied he would now ſpeak to me, if not in direct terms—yet in ſuch as would leave me no longer in doubt as to his real ſentiments: yet while I wiſhed this, I dreaded it; and when he entered the place where I ſat, I know not which of us appeared the moſt confuſed. He had long ſtudiouſly avoided me, and certainly did not now expect to meet me; but as he knew I had ſeen him, and perhaps had not reſolution enough to deny himſelf the unexpected opportunity of ſpeaking to me, he came into that wing of the temple, and, after the common ſalutation of the morning, ſat down near me.

"I inquired after my father, though it was not an hour ſince I had been in the room; but it gave me occaſion to ſay, though in a faltering voice, how much I was obliged to Ormſby for his conſtant attendance.

tendance. I had not concluded the ſentence, when he ſaid, 'Obligations, Miſs Montalbert!—ſurely all obligations are mine; but were it otherwiſe, were not your father my beſt friend—that he *is your* father would be enough to induce me to make any ſacrifices: there is happineſs in being able to ſerve him as my benefactor; but there is ſomething more than happineſs in thinking that, in attending on the reſpectable parent of Miſs Montalbert, I ſave her from one hour's fatigue, or mitigate to her one hour of anxiety.'

"I will not relate the ſequel of our converſation before it ended: Ormſby, while he accuſed himſelf at once of preſumption and ingratitude, profeſſed for me the moſt violent, though hopeleſs, paſſion. He ſaw too evidently, that if it depended on me it would not be hopeleſs: already my heart had ſaid to me much more than Ormſby, even in making this declaration, dared to intimate. It had whiſpered that my father's partiality for him might very probably conquer the objections that his total

total want of fortune might raiſe. I had fancied that it was impoſſible my father could leave us ſo much together, unleſs he meant to give a tacit conſent to an affection which was ſo likely to ariſe between two young perſons. I had imagined, that, finding us both neceſſary to his comfort, he intended to unite us: my fortune muſt be ſuch as, I ſuppoſed, made any conſideration as to that of my lover entirely needleſs.—Alas! how little is the inexperienced mind of youth capable of judging of thoſe motives that influence men in advanced life. Though my father was retired from the world, he had not loſt in retirement the paſſions that influence the men of that world: on the contrary, living where he was the lord of many miles, where none, either in his houſe or around it, ever diſputed his will, he had, like a deſpot, entirely forgotten that others had any will at all. Of a marriage of love he had no idea; nor did it ever occur to him, as a thing poſſible, that a dependent relation, who was indebted to

his bounty for a ſubſiſtence, could dare to lift his eyes to a daughter of the houſe of Montalbert, for whom, though he had never yet hinted at them, my father had very different views.

" But love, too apt to liſten to the voice of hope, ſuffered us not to ſee the miſery we were laying up for ourſelves; and even amidſt the reproaches Ormſby often made himſelf, for what he termed treachery and ingratitude, the flattering illuſions into which we were betrayed by youthful inexperience, not only quieted theſe alarms of conſcience, but made us liſten with ſomething bordering on reſentment to the remonſtrances of my friend, Mrs. Leſſington, who took every occaſion of repreſenting the danger of my indulging my predilection for Ormſby. I endeavoured to perſuade her, as I had perſuaded myſelf, that I ſhould one day become his wife, with the permiſſion of my father. Mrs. Leſſington, who undoubtedly knew the world and my father's temper much better than I did, left nothing

thing unſaid that was likely to convince me of this dangerous error: ſhe even threatened to inform my father of the truth, unleſs I endeavoured to conquer this fatal prepoſſeſſion; and ſhe aſſured me if ſhe did, the conſequence would be the immediate diſgrace and diſmiſſion of Ormſby. This menace, which I knew ſhe would never execute, had an effect exactly oppoſite to that which ſhe intended. The idea of Ormſby, driven from the houſe, ſuffering poverty and mortification, and abandoned by the world only for his attachment to me, endeared him to me infinitely more than he would have been, had I ſeen him ſurrounded with affluence and proſperity. Nothing is ſo dangerous as pity; and my friend, in attempting to ſave me, haſtened my ruin by exciting it.

I cannot, Roſalie, trace the progreſs of this fatal paſſion. My confeſſor, who alone might have checked its progreſs, was ſurely careleſs of his charge, or was

poſſibly become indifferent to the welfare of a family he was ſoon on the point of quitting. He went to Rome exactly at the time when he might perhaps have ſaved me, and it was ſome time before he was replaced by Mr. Hayward.

" During that interval, as Mrs. Leſſington was gone into the weſt on a viſit to her huſband's relations, Ormſby was more than ever alone with me. Every hour, indeed, in which the attendance of the one or the other was not neceſſary in my father's room, we paſſed together. From an habit of indulging myſelf in the illuſive hope that I might one day be his wife, I inſenſibly learned to conſider myſelf already ſo in the ſight of Heaven..... Ormſby was young and paſſionate: he was not an artful ſeducer; but I had no mother, I had no friend, and thoſe who candidly reflect on my ſituation will ſurely compaſſionate, though they may not perhaps acquit me.

" How ſoon, alas! was this deviation from rectitude and honour ſeverely and bitterly

terly puniſhed. Though my father had been wilfully blind or ſtrangely negligent, the ſervants, and from them the neighbours, ſaw enough to make them ſuſpect more. We had little or no communication with the gentlemen's families around us, divided from them as we were by the difference of religion, habits, and connections; but in ours, as in every other neighbourhood, there were officious and impertinent people, whoſe greateſt pleaſure was to inquire into the affairs of others, and diſturb as much as was in their power the peace of families. The country town adjoining to Holmwood produced at that time, as indeed it has done ſince, but too many of this deſcription. — I, who hardly knew that ſuch perſons exiſted, was, however, marked out for the victim of their malignity; and, as if the terrors that now inceſſantly beſet me were inſufficient, for I found myſelf likely to become a mother, one of theſe officious fiends completed, or rather accelerated, the evil deſtiny that hung over me.

"While I waited with agoniſing impatience the return of Mrs. Leſſington, whoſe counſel was ſo neceſſary in my preſent alarming ſituation, Ormſby, more wretched than I was, attempted to ſooth and conſole me, and I was inſenſible of any other comfort than what I derived from weeping in his arms. Little dreaming of the ſtorm that was ready to burſt upon us, I ſought him as uſual one morning in the plantation, where we were accuſtomed, as it was yet early autumn, to meet in a morning before either the family were likely to interrupt us, and before my father demanded either his attendance or mine—I found him not; ſuppoſing it earlier than I had believed, I traverſed for ſome time the walks of the wood without uneaſineſs—but at length his abſence ſurpriſed and then alarmed me. I returned ſlowly towards the houſe, more and more amazed that Ormſby did not appear—I met the under gardener, and, without any preciſe deſign, I aſked him ſome trifling queſtion—the man, inſtead of anſwering,

ing, looked at me with a countenance expreſſive of terror and ſurpriſe; then, without anſwering, hurried away; while I, dreading I knew not what, quickened my ſteps towards the houſe, and was met in the lawn that immediately ſurrounded it by my own maid, a young woman who had been lately ſent to me from France by a friend, and who was already much attached to me. *Her* countenance ſtartled me infinitely more than that of the man I had juſt paſſed—I haſtily inquired what was the matter?—Helene attempted to utter a few words in French, but her voice failed her, and, ſeizing my hands, ſhe looked at me with ſuch an expreſſion of terror and anguiſh, that the only idea it conveyed was the death of my father: before my incoherent and breathleſs inquiries, or her attempts to anſwer them ſucceeded, my father's old butler came out, and, though he ſeemed equally terrified, he had juſt command enough of himſelf to tell me that I muſt immediately

attend his maſter; without having any diſtinct notion of the cauſe for which I was thus unexpectedly ſummoned, I obeyed in ſuch confuſion of mind that I know not how I reached the room.

" My father was not as uſual at ſo early an hour in his bed, but ſitting in a chair—I ſaw that ſomething had greatly diſturbed him, and my guilty conſcience whiſpered me that our fatal ſecret was diſcovered.... Trembling, ſo that I could not move acroſs the room without the aſſiſtance of Helene, I at length approached the place. My father's eyes were ſternly fixed on my face; his lips quivered, and his voice faltered, while he reached his hand towards me, and gave me a letter he held in it.

' Read that—(ſaid he ſternly)—read it—and hear me for the firſt and the laſt time I ſhall ever ſpeak again on ſo hateful a ſubject. *If* I thought you capable of any part of the folly, the infamy, which this letter attaches to your conduct, I would

would not hold even this parley with you—but I *will* not think it; though I ſeverely arraign myſelf for my inattention, yet I know that a daughter of mine would not dare to encourage any man without my approbation; ſtill leſs, is it poſſible that Roſalie Montalbert ſhould think of a boy, who, though diſtantly my relation, and therefore a gentleman, is a beggar.... He is gone—you will ſee him no more.'

"I heard, indeed, no more—for my ſenſes forſook me, and I eſcaped from the rage and reproaches of my father; nor was I awakened from this trance till I found myſelf on my bed, with Helene weeping by me.—'What has happened to me, Helene?' ſaid I; for at that moment my recollection was confuſed, and, though I had the impreſſion of ſomething very dreadful on my mind, I remembered no more than that ſome dreadful evil had befallen Ormſby. Helene could only anſwer by tears and ſobs——I raiſed myſelf in my bed—'Tell me, (ſaid I), my dear

friend, what did my father mean?—what is become of Ormſby?'

'Ah! dear young lady, (replied Helene), what would become of you, what would become of us all, if our maſter knew the truth, which now he will not allow himſelf only to ſuſpect.—Oh! he is ſo paſſionate, he is ſo terrible, when he is angry, that I believe, upon my honour, he would deſtroy us all.'

'I wiſh he would deſtroy *me*, Helene, (ſaid I, ſighing deeply); but, unleſs you now intend to ſuffer me to die before you, tell me, I conjure you to tell me, what my father meant by ſaying that I ſhould never ſee Ormſby more?'

'Indeed, (replied Helene), my dear miſtreſs, I know no more of it than you do. In this great houſe you know that what is done at one end of it may very eaſily be unknown at the other. . . . . I am as ignorant as you are how—but Mr. Ormſby is gone, or - - - - - - - -'

"She ſtopped and heſitated.—'They have killed him, (exclaimed I)—I know they

they have deſtroyed him—do not deceive me—I will not be deceived——but let not my father, my inhuman father, imagine that I will ſurvive—no, I will inſtantly go, I will avow the truth, and follow my huſband to the grave.'——The frenzy that poſſeſſed me gave me ſtrength: I ſprang from the bed, and, in a ſtate of deſperation, was ruſhing towards my father's room, when Helene, terrified at my attempt, threw herſelf before me, and ſhutting the door, locked it, and ſecured the key. This preſence of mind alone ſaved me from the deſtruction on which I was throwing myſelf; for I believe, that had I at that moment appeared before my father, acknowledged my ſituation and my attachment to Ormſby, that he would, without heſitation, have ſtabbed me to the heart.

" Such was the diſtracted ſtate of my mind, that it was only when my ſtrength was entirely exhauſted that Helene could prevail upon me to liſten to her arguments. At length I ſunk into ſilent de-

ſpair, becauſe I had no longer the power of ſpeaking, and then Helene ventured to leave me, carefully locking the door of my chamber after her, as well as that of the anti-room, and haſten away to procure not only ſome medicine for me, which ſhe hoped would quiet my agitated ſpirits, but the benefit of the counſel ſhe knew ſhe ſhould receive from the Abbé Hayward, who, though he had not been more than a week in the houſe, had gained the confidence and good opinion of every one in the family.

" When ſhe was gone, I endeavoured to recal to my mind the words, the looks, and geſtures of my father ..... I ſhuddered as they paſſed in my memory, and I dared not think ſteadily upon the ſcene I had paſſed. Even now, Roſalie—even at the diſtance of almoſt nineteen years, I find that I cannot dwell upon it without horror."

It was true the recollection affected Mrs. Vyvian ſo much, that a cold trembling ſeized her. Her voice failed, and

Roſalie,

Roſalie, terrified at the ſituation in which ſhe ſaw her mother, entreated her to forbear any farther exertion till ſhe was more able to undertake it. It was more than an hour before ſhe was ſufficiently recovered for Roſalie to leave her; at length, finding Mrs. Vyvian more compoſed, ſhe retired to the houſe ſhe uſed to call her home, having ſettled to be again at her mother's bedſide at a very early hour the following morning.

CHAP.

CHAP. XV.

ONCE more ſeated by the bedſide of her mother, who, on this morning, was too much indiſpoſed to be able to leave it, Roſalie liſtened in ſilence to the continuation of a narrative in which ſhe was ſo deeply intereſted.

"While Helene was gone, (ſaid Mrs. Vyvian), I collected ſtrength enough to riſe and go to the window of my bedchamber. It was now night, but there was light enough to enable me to diſcern every object on the lawn round the houſe. I gazed, however, without knowing why, or on what:—the thought of Ormſby gone—loſt to me for ever—perhaps deſtroyed—filled me with ſuch undeſcribable horror, that my power of reflection

ſeemed

ſeemed to be annihilated. Impreſſed with that one idea, my heart ſeemed petrified; the certainty of inſtant death would have been received as a matter of indifference. All that I wiſhed was, to be aſſured of the fate of Ormſby——I thought that if I knew what was become of him, I could brave the ſevereſt anger of my father, and die content, ſince I believed my death inevitable..... How diſmal every object that I ſurveyed from my window appeared!—not a human being appeared round the houſe: the woods that you may recollect terminate the lawn on one ſide were almoſt half ſtripped of their leaves; but they looked black, dreary, and fit for deeds of horror.——Yet do not, my dear Roſalie, believe, that however cruel I at that moment thought my father, I could ſuppoſe him capable of ſo dreadful a crime as that of directing the death of Ormſby; but I figured to myſelf, that, rendered deſperate by the force that had been uſed to tear him away, he had reſiſted, and ſunk under

under the numbers of unfeeling men who were ready at every hazard to obey my father's orders—no otherwiſe could I account, in the preſent confuſed ſtate of my mind, for his having diſappeared without ſending me one line—one laſt adieu!—— or having made any attempt to give me notice of the ſcene that awaited me, or to arm me with the courage it required to paſs through it.

" I cannot diſcriminate the various emotions that agitated my mind during the abſence of Helene, who, on her return in about an hour, found me ſtill ſitting at the window, as if I expected to ſee Ormſby paſs, as he ſometimes uſed to do under it of an evening, when he uſed to tell me he had peculiar delight in watching the light in my room, and ſeeing me paſs acroſs it, long before he dared tell me he loved me.

" But now, alas! he was to appear there no more—and when Helene returned and came into my apartment, carefully locking

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ing the door after her, the expreſſion of fear and diſmay which her countenance wore renewed all my terrors.....I flew towards her, and, though unable to ſpeak, ſhe ſaw that I anticipated the worſt news ſhe could relate to me.

" She tried to command herſelf, that ſhe might prevail upon me to be tranquil enough to attend to my own ſafety. It was, however, ſome time before I was in a condition to liſten to her.

" Helene at length related to me that the houſe was now apparently quiet, but that an air of amazement and conſternation was perceivable on the faces of all its inhabitants; all of whom ſeemed afraid to ſpeak or even to look at each other.—The Abbé Hayward, ſhe ſaid, had been alone with my father the whole day, and none of the ſervants had been permitted to wait but the old butler; that, on her applying to him for intelligence, he ſaid he had orders to tell her, when ſhe came down from her young lady, that Mr. Montalbert ordered her attendance.

' Ah,

'Ah, Madam, (ſaid Helene in French), how I trembled when I heard this..... I went, however, and my maſter ordering me to approach the place where he ſat, ſaid—Helene, it is my expreſs orders, as well to you as to every other ſervant in my houſe, that no goſſipping, no converſation, not even a word, ſhall be uttered as to any circumſtance that has happened, or that you may ſuppoſe has happened in this family. The ſlighteſt failure in this reſpect will be attended with ill conſequences—the leaſt of which will be the loſs of your place.....I aſk you no queſtions as to your *paſt* diſcretion—— As to your lady, tell her from me that I expect ſhe will to-morrow appear before me as my daughter ought to appear; on which condition only, the folly, or the affectation of this day, for I know not which to call it, ſhall be forgotten. You will tell her, as I have already cauſed it to be intimated to my people, that from *this hour* the name of Ormſby is never to be mentioned within theſe walls——go—

and

and remember what I ſay to you——— Your father, Madam, (continued Helene), looked more ſtern than ever, as he ſaid this; and indeed I trembled ſo, that I thought I muſt have fallen down as you did. That dear good man, the Abbé Hayward, looked at me as if he wiſhed, but dared not, ſay any thing to comfort me. I got out of the room as well as I could, and went, looking I believe more white than a ghoſt, into the ſervants' hall, where I ſaw no perſon but the coachman and the gardener; neither of them ſpoke to me—they ſeem even afraid of ſpeaking to each other. I paſſed into the houſekeeper's room, under pretence of aſking for ſomething for you: Mrs. Nelſon was there, with the two houſe-maids and the laundry-maid; but inſtead of aſking me any queſtions about you, as Mrs. Nelſon almoſt always does if you are at any time the leaſt ill, ſhe never inquired after you, though ſhe knew you had been confined to your room ill the whole day; as to the maids,

maids, they ſeemed like ſtatues, and while I ſtaid on one pretence or other, in hopes of gaining ſome intelligence, Mrs. Nelſon would have ſent one of them to the ſtore-room, but ſhe turned as pale as death, and ſaid it was impoſſible to go unleſs one of the other maids went with her. Mrs. Nelſon gave her a ſtrange look, but ſaid nothing, and they went away together.'

" All this, ſo ſtrangely obſcure and unaccountable, redoubled my inquietude.—Something very unuſual then had happened in the houſe, which had impreſſed terror on the minds of its inhabitants—What could this be but ſome violence that had been offered to Ormſby, which was known to all the ſervants, but which none of them dared to ſpeak of?—There were few events, the certainty of which could be ſo dreadful as the ſtate of horrible ſuſpence I was now in. I think that my intellects, unable to ſuſtain, ſunk under it, and that the artificial calm that followed was the effect of the agonies in which

which I paſſed this melancholy day, and the night that followed it.

" Still placed in the window, with my eyes fixed on the lawn and woods that ſurrounded it, I heard the incoherent narrative of Helene, and continued to torment myſelf with every terrific idea that my ſickening brain could raiſe.... Hideous ſhadows ſeemed to flit before me—I almoſt imagined that, in the murmurs of the wind, I heard the dying groans of Ormſby—that I heard him call upon me, and bid me adieu.—From the indulgence of waking dreams ſo horrible, I was ſtartled by a rapping at the door of the anti-room that led from the ſtaircaſe to my bedchamber. Helene, fearing ſhe knew not what, heſitated, and dared not open it; ſhe aſked me what ſhe ſhould do, but I was utterly incapable of anſwering, and we were at length relieved from our terrors by hearing the voice of Mr. Hayward, who deſired to be admitted.

" He ſpoke to me with ſo much ſoothing kindneſs, and reaſoned ſo properly with me,

me, that tears, which had been for many hours denied me, flowed from my eyes: I dared not, however, aſk—for I yet knew but very little of Mr. Hayward—I dared not aſk what was become of the unfortunate Ormſby; but, as if this worthy man had read the thoughts, I had not courage to expreſs—he gradually managed his converſation ſo as to bring it to the pointed he wanted to ſpeak upon.—'I was extremely concerned, (ſaid he), that the precipitancy of Mr. Montalbert's manner alarmed you as it did.... Indeed I have told him, that I greatly blame his needleſs harſhneſs, produced only by an anonymous letter, and certainly unfounded. I can eaſily imagine how the abrupt manner in which he ſpoke to you might have the effect it had, and I have at length perſuaded him to believe, that without any improper attachment to Mr. Ormſby, you might be affected in the manner you were. He is become more reaſonable ſince his paſſion has ſubſided, which was raiſed to a degree of frenzy by

cerned

that infamous letter, and he ſeems concerned for the terror he inflicted upon you, and willing to forget it upon one poſitive condition.'

" Having no courage to aſk what that condition was, I remained ſilent. Mr. Hayward thus proceeded——

' As Mr. Montalbert cannot ſubdue his diſpleaſure, when he thinks it poſſible that Mr. Ormſby had or could be ſuppoſed to have been guilty of the preſumption of pretending to you, he has thought it proper to remove him from hence immediately, and, to put an end at once to the very recollection of ſuch a report, he inſiſts upon it that the name of Ormſby is not mentioned in the houſe.'

" I ſighed, but dared not aſk what was the fate of this unfortunate Ormſby..... I felt, however, conſiderable relief from the manner in which Mr. Hayward ſpoke of him; for I was perſuaded, that had my father taken any very cruel meaſures in regard to him, ſuch a man as Mr. Hayward would neither have tolerated ſuch conduct,

conduct, or, if he could not have checked it, would he have ſpoken of it ſo calmly.

" Still, however, the ſad uncertainty of what was become of him ſeemed ſo heavily to preſs on my heart, that it was ready to burſt..... I could not ſpeak; but Mr. Hayward, who appeared to be well acquainted with the painful ſenſations which were probably pictured on my countenance, went on, in the moſt ſoothing manner, to tell me what was, he thought, the beſt part I could take for my peace of mind, and for the general tranquillity of the family.

' What I wiſh you to conſider of, my dear Miſs Montalbert, (ſaid he), is, whether it would not contribute much to your future eaſe and comfort, could you determine, in compliance with your father's commands, not only to mention no more of this unfortunate young man, but to reſolve on appearing before your father tomorrow, at the hour he has appointed, to hear

hear maſs, with a calm and even cheerful countenance. Let him not ſuppoſe that the obſervance of his commands is a greater ſacrifice than it ought to be—appear to think, that whatever is his pleaſure ought not to be diſputed, and, I think, I can venture to ſay, that whatever uneaſineſs this wicked letter has raiſed in the breaſt of your father will be at an end, as your behaviour will prove to him that the charges in it were entirely unfounded:—you will be reſtored to *his* confidence and to your own peace.'

"I was ſtill incapable of anſwering; but, as I remained quiet, and ſhed not a tear, Mr. Hayward thought he might venture to proceed.

'I am convinced, (continued he), that you feel the force of all I have urged; but, I believe, it is better to ſtate to you what are my apprehenſions of the conſequences, if you fail of acquiring this command over yourſelf..... It will, I fear, make your father ſuſpect, that this malicious informer had ſome ground for

the aſſertions he or ſhe has dared to make. It is much to be apprehended, that Mr. Ormſby, who is wholly, I *believe*, in his power, will ſuffer if ſuch an imagination predominates in your father's mind; and I ſhould doubt whether the extreme indignation which he ſuffers himſelf to feel might not ſo far annihilate his tenderneſs for you, as to urge him even to ſo harſh a meaſure as that of ſending you to a convent in Italy, and compelling you to take the veil.'

" Mr. Hayward ſtopped, expecting that I might by this time have ſo far recovered my ſpirits, as to be able to promiſe that I would attempt at leaſt to regulate my behaviour by his advice—but I remained ſilent.... Rendered deſperate by what I had heard, I became incapable of attending to the conſequences of the ſtep I was about to take: the moment, however, I could find voice and words, I related, in a ſlow and ſolemn tone, the dreadful truth; but before I had entirely finiſhed my melancholy narrative, the room turned round

round with me, my eyes became dim, and my ſenſes forſook me.

" When I recovered, Helene was chafing my temples, and taking other means to bring me to myſelf; the Abbé Hayward was traverſing the room in the agitated manner of a perſon who has received ſome alarming intelligence, and knows not how to act. When he ſaw that I was a little reſtored, he approached me, and, in a voice hardly inarticulate, ſaid, ' Moſt unhappy young woman; this is no time to flatter—deſtruction hangs over you, and it is only in your own power to eſcape it; for without your own efforts, nobody can ſave you. I will not deceive you, Miſs Montalbert—I will tell you what I really believe, that if your father was aſſured of what you have now entruſted me with, the life of Mr. Ormſby would be inſufficient to ſatisfy his vengeance—though he would be the *firſt* victim..... Heaven direct me for the beſt! (cried the good man). Heaven direct me!—What can I do?'

"He again traverſed the room in ſilent anguiſh; but what were *his* feelings compared to mine!

"At length he recovered himſelf enough to ſpeak again with compoſure.

'Something muſt be done, (ſaid he); but till I have more time to conſider what, let me once more aſk you, if you cannot, my dear Miſs Montalbert, command reſolution enough to appear before your father to-morrow with ſome degree of ſerenity?—Reflect a moment how much depends on this exertion on your part:—no otherwiſe than by this neceſſary diſſimulation can you hope to avert the impending danger—danger that may ſo fatally affect more lives than one.'

"I now acquired ſteadineſs of voice enough to ſay, 'Let Ormſby live—let *him* but eſcape the vengeance which ought not to fall on him, and let *me*, who alone am to blame, periſh under the indignation of my incenſed father..... One victim will perhaps ſatisfy him——I deſire to die—and when

when I am dead, the reſentment raiſed by injured honour may ſurely be appeaſed.'

" That I ſpoke at all, and ſpoke calmly, though it was with the ſudden ſadneſs of deſpair, ſeemed to Mr. Hayward to be a favourable ſymptom. He purſued his argument, therefore, and endeavoured to convince me whatever hope remained of concealing this fatal ſecret, muſt reſt entirely upon my own reſolution and diſcretion.

" The life of Ormſby, he ſaid, was in my hands:—he recalled to my mind the temper of my father—the fierceneſs of his anger—the ſteadineſs of his reſentment.... I liſtened and ſhuddered.

' If, (ſaid he), the mere information that the ſuſpicion of ſuch an affection between you and Mr. Ormſby was entertained in a neighbourhood, where he cares nothing about the people, has ſo enraged Mr. Montalbert as to induce him to act as he has done in regard to Mr. Ormſby—what would there not be to dread from

the fury of his reſentment, were he to know what you have to-night related to me - - - - - -'

"'I took advantage of a pauſe Mr. Hayward made to repeat ſome of the words he had uſed.—' Acted as he has done, (cried I, in regard to Ormſby); tell me then—I conjure you tell me—*how* has my father acted?—By what ſtratagem, or force, could he tear away that unhappy young man, even before he knew that there was the leaſt ground for the charge that was made againſt him?—Oh, Mr. Hayward!—if you are capable of mercy—if you really pity the agonies that rend my heart, tell me, I conjure you tell me, what is become of Ormſby?—I think, that if I once knew, I ſhould become calm—I think I could ſummons reſolution enough to conſult my own ſafety; but, indeed, the miſery of this uncertainty is ſuch.... All my thoughts are ſo full of horror, that the death with which I am threatened would be a welcome releaſe from ſuch intolerable torture.'

'I ſo-

'I ſolemnly aſſure you, (replied Mr. Hayward), that I do not know what is become of our unfortunate friend, nor, perhaps, ſhall I ever know..... I dare not make any inquiry; and all I have been able to learn is, that, on receiving the infamous ſcrawl laſt night, your father ordered every body out of his room, and remained alone, or only with Ormſby, for ſome time. He then directed two of the grooms to be ſent to him, and that the ſteward might alſo attend..... Mr. Ormſby appeared no more. Theſe two men, the grooms, have never been ſeen ſince; but there is no track of a carriage around the houſe, nor has any body been ſeen to leave it. The ſteward obſerves the moſt profound ſilence, and all that is known in the houſe is, that ſomething has happened which has obliged Mr. Ormſby ſuddenly to leave it; that he has deeply offended Mr. Montalbert; and that it is required of all who would not enrage their maſter, and be diſmiſſed from the family, never to men-

tion the name of Ormſby even to each other.'

'My father *did* ſee him? (inquired I)—had they any converſation which urged on this precipitate violence?'

'I believe they had, but I know nothing certainly—any attempt on my part to draw from Mr. Montalbert more than he chuſes to entruſt me with, would not only be abortive, but would, in all probability, deprive me of every future opportunity of ſoftening the aſperity of his reſentment. Let me conjure you, my deareſt Madam, if you would not hereafter reproach yourſelf with the fatal effects of this reſentment, to exert your utmoſt reſolution—endeavour to command yourſelf ſo as to appear to-morrow before your father.... The ſecond attempt will be more eaſy, and I truſt, in a day or two, your ſpirits will be ſo much calmed, that you will be able to conſider of taking the meaſures ſo neceſſary to be thought of for the preſervation of your reputation, perhaps of your life.'

You,

'You believe then, (ſaid I), that the life of poor Ormſby is ſafe?'

'Believe it!—(exclaimed Mr. Hayward)—ſurely I believe it..... To whatever extremities the unhappy prejudices or violent paſſions of Mr. Montalbert may drive him, and none can have greater apprehenſions on that ſubject than I have, hitherto I hope and believe that Mr. Montalbert has taken no unjuſtifiable meaſures in regard to this luckleſs young man.—(Then deeply ſighing, Mr. Hayward added)—In my opinion his future fate depends entirely upon you——it is in your power to ſave or to deſtroy him.'

'Gracious Heaven!—(exclaimed I)—what right has my father over this ill-ſtarred young man?—*My* life may be in his power—he gave it me, and moſt willingly would I reſign it; but Ormſby ſurely ought not to ſuffer.'

'Mr. Montalbert, (interrupted Mr. Hayward), will conſider but little what he *ought* to do, or what he has a *right* to

do, when vengeance is in queſtion; but ſurely I need urge this ſubject no further—you are perfectly acquainted with his temper—you know that he is maſter of the country around for ſome miles. His ſervants, his dependents, his tenants, are in ſuch habits of obeying him, that he is in ſome meaſure capable of exerciſing a ſort of deſpotiſm, which, though frequent enough in other countries, is ſeldom ſeen in this. . . . . I will now leave you, my dear Miſs Montalbert—again beſeeching you to conſider what I have ſaid, and to command yourſelf as much as poſſible to-morrow.'

" Mr. Hayward then left me, and ſent to my faithful Helene to attend me, who had been abſent during our converſation; but my ſenſes were yet ſtunned by the violence of the ſhock I had received—I could not ſhed a tear, and ſat like a ſtatue repeating almoſt unconſciouſly to myſelf——' Ormſby is gone!—he is loſt for ever—he is condemned to ignominy and diſgrace; and it is *I* who have undone

done him, who may perhaps occaſion his death!'

"I know not now by what arguments Helene at length prevailed upon me to take ſome refreſhment, and to undreſs myſelf.....I believe that by the contrivance of Mr. Hayward, who, as I afterwards found, kept a ſmall diſpenſary of medicines in his own room, Helene gave me ſome remedy that aſſiſted in quieting my ſpirits—for after paſſing ſome time in a ſtate of mind which I cannot even at this diſtance of time reflect upon without horror, I ſunk into inſenſibility, from which I was ſuddenly ſtartled by a fancied noiſe, and awoke only to recollect all the bitterneſs of my deſtiny."

The narrative of Mrs. Vyvian, which became every moment more intereſting to Roſalie, was now interrupted by a letter which announced the arrival of Mr. Vyvian, Mrs. Boſworth, and her ſiſter, in London. Her ſpirits were already agitated by recollecting ſcenes in which ſhe had formerly ſuffered ſo much, and this in-

telligence contributed to overwhelm them. The viſit from her family was not to be made till the ſecond or third day after the preſent; there was yet, therefore, time enough for her to relate the ſequel of her ſtory; which, at the requeſt of Roſalie, who ſacrificed her own impatience to conſideration for her mother's health, was poſtponed to the following morning.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVI.

MRS. Vyvian on the following day thus proceeded———

" When I look back on the ſituation I was now in, I am aſtoniſhed that I ever ſupported it—deſcription at this diſtance of time could but do little juſtice to the ſtate of my mind, even if I were capable of diſcriminating now the variety of miſeries I then ſuffered under. It ſeems, on retroſpection, the moſt extraordinary circumſtance in the world, that in ſuch a ſtate of mind as I was in, I ſhould have acquired reſolution enough to appear before my father, as Mr. Hayward recommended, on the following day; but this I did do; and though I cannot but ſuppoſe that my figure and countenance bore ſufficient teſtimony to the ſtate of my heart, he

he ſeemed determined not to notice the deadly paleneſs of my countenance, or the feeble and uncertain ſtep with which I approached him: yet, when he ſuppoſed I did not remark him, he caſt towards me looks of indignation and reſentment, the meaning of which I could not miſtake. I ſhuddered when I obſerved them, but in my turn affected to be as tranquil as before this ſtorm that had wrecked for ever my happineſs and my peace.

"It was highly probable that the violent agitation I had undergone, as well as the dreadful uneaſineſs that preyed on my mind, for the fate of my unfortunate lover, would finiſh my inquietudes for the future, and bury in oblivion the fatal ſecret of this hapleſs affection; but this did not happen, and now every hour as it paſſed added ſuch inſupportable dread of what was to happen in future to the miſeries of the preſent moment, that to exiſt long in ſuch a ſtate ſeemed impoſſible—yet were my ſufferings but begun.

"Nothing

" Nothing could be more dreary and deſolate than every object appeared round the houſe. It was the dark and melancholy month of November, and nature ſeemed to be in uniſon with my feelings. I looked now on the ſame ſcenes as I had ſo lately beheld luxuriant in foliage, and illuminated with the ſummer ſun—the ſame ſcenes in which Ormſby had ſo long been a principal object..... Now—as the leaves fell ſlowly from the ſallow trees, they ſeemed to ſtrew his grave—the wind, as murmured hollow through the perennial foliage of the pines and firs, ſounded to *my* ears as if it was loaded with his dying groans——I heard him ſigh among the thick ſhrubs that bordered the wood walks; he ſeemed to reproach my calmneſs—yet it was not the tranquillity of indifference, it was the torpor of deſpair.

" I went out alone, that I might weep at liberty; yet, when I found myſelf in the ſilent ſolitude of the woods, I was unable to ſhed a tear, but ſat down on one

one of the benches, and gazed on vacancy with fixed eyes, and without having any diſtinct idea of the objects I beheld. In theſe diſmal rambles rain and tempeſt, and once or twice night, overtook me. I was careleſs or inſenſible of outward circumſtances; and certainly if my father had not determined to ſhut his eyes to the truth, as if the only alternative was between extreme ſeverity and total ignorance, he muſt have diſcovered from my conduct that all his ſuſpicions did not go beyond the reality.

" Some very fatal cataſtrophe would have followed the ſtate of mind I was in, had not the pious and friendly councils of the Abbé Hayward, and the aſſiduous care of Helene, ſaved me from myſelf: the one exhorted me to patience, and a reliance on the mercy of Heaven; the other ſoothed and flattered my ſickening ſoul with the hope of better days, and enabled me to endure the preſent by encouraging me to look forward to the return of Mrs. Leſ-

ſington,

ſington, who alone ſeemed to be likely to adviſe and ſuccour me in a ſituation which every hour and every day rendered more perilous.

" Mr. Hayward frequently followed me into the depth of the woods, argued, remonſtrated, and then ſoothed and endeavoured to conſole me. I heard his arguments, and even his reproofs, with ſubmiſſion and calmneſs; but when he told me that I ought to be cheerful, to be reſigned, to endeavour to conquer my affection for Ormſby, and to attempt, by every means in my power, to conceal that it had ever exiſted to ſo fatal an exceſs— I loſt my patience, and my reſpect for this good man did not prevent my flying from him with ſomething like reſentment and diſguſt.

" So paſſed a month—a wretched month, during which time the name of Ormſby had never reached my ears, ſave only when Mr. Hayward, in the converſation which he thought it neceſſary to hold with

with me, reluctantly named him, or when I could ſo far command the agonies with which my heart was torn as to name him to Helene, and liſten to the conjectures with which ſhe attempted to relieve me as to what was become of him.

" Of this, however, ſhe knew no more than I did; yet, from the looks and manners of the ſervants with whom ſhe converſed at the times when they were neceſſarily altogether, a thouſand vague ideas floated in her mind, to which ſhe ſometimes gave utterance with more zeal than prudence. From her I learned, that the two men who had diſappeared when Ormſby was ſo ſuddenly ſent away had never ſince returned, and that the places they filled were now occupied by others. I heard too, that though the name of Ormſby was never mentioned whenever the ſteward, my father's old ſervant, or the houſekeeper were preſent; yet that the inferior ſervants were continually whiſpering ſtrange things, and that the people

people in the neighbourhood talked of nothing elſe ; ſome of them going ſo far as to ſay, that inquiry ought to be made by people authoriſed, for that Mr. Ormſby had certainly been ſpirited away; while others gave dark hints, that, conſidering the revengeful temper of Mr. Montalbert, it would be well if ſomething worſe than being ſpirited away had not befallen the poor young man.

" All this I heard with alternate anguiſh and depreſſion, of which it would be difficult to convey any idea to another. The fatal predilection that I had for Ormſby was then known, for no other reaſon could be given for ſuch conduct towards him as was imputed to my father. I now ſaw none of the neighbours, for of the very few who had been accuſtomed to viſit at the houſe, not one at this time approached it, and as I believed curioſity would have prompted them to come if they had no other motive, I thought it certain that my father had taken meaſures to prevent their viſits. This I was not

diſpleaſed

diſpleaſed at, for *their* looks would have been more uneaſy to me than were thoſe of the ſervants; whenever I ſaw any of *them* I was covered with confuſion, and fancied they would remark and account for the ſad change in my face and figure, of which I could not fail to be myſelf conſcious.

" But if I fled thus from the obſervation of ſervants, what was my fear when compelled to appear before the ſevere and ſcrutiniſing eyes of my father?—— I had always an awe approaching to dread of him, even in thoſe comparatively happy days when no reproaches of conſcience aſſailed me..... Now I endeavoured to attend on him with the ſame aſſiduity as I uſed to do before Ormſby became a ſharer in the taſk, or rather undertook it entirely; but whether it was that my timidity made me aukward, and that, therefore, I was incapable of acquitting myſelf as I formerly did, or whether my father, more really angry than he choſe to avow, took theſe occaſions to vent in peeviſhneſs

peeviſhneſs ſome part of the reſentment and indignation he felt. Certain it is, that his harſhneſs and aſperity were almoſt inſupportable, and the unkind expreſſions he ſometimes uſed, the looks of rage and diſdain he caſt upon me, were not unfrequently ſuch as affected my ſpirits ſo much as to throw me into fainting fits, from which I reproached my poor Helene for recalling me.... Death, which alone ſeemed likely to end my miſeries, I continually invoked, and I know not what would have been the conſequence of ſuch a ſeries of preſent ſuffering, added to the dread of the future, had they continued much longer.

" Yet before the return of Mrs. Leſſington, to which only I looked forward with the leaſt hope of mitigating my woes, I had ſome trials of fortitude to encounter more difficult to ſuſtain than any I had yet experienced.

" At the end of a long row of elms, of which now a few ſingle trees only remain,

main, you recollect a high mount now planted with firs, poplars, and larches, into which, as it is railed round, nobody now enters; you perhaps remember too, the very large yew tree that ſhadows a great ſpace of ground near it, and which is alſo railed round. That mound covers the ruins of a ſmall pariſh church, and that yew tree was in the church-yard.

"An avenue of ancient trees was terminated by this church, at the diſtance of ſomething more than a quarter of a mile from the houſe. It was merely the chancel of a larger edifice which had belonged to a monaſtery, ſome of the ruins of which remained ſcattered over the ground, and when I and my brother were children, we had been told by the ſervants many of thoſe legends that almoſt always belong to ſuch places. It was ſaid too among them, that beneath theſe veſtiges of buildings, which were not conſiderable above the ground, there were arched vaults, and ſubterraneous paſſages, which formerly

formerly ſerved as burial places for the religious perſons of this monaſtery. Their coffins, placed in niches along the walls, had been formerly ſeen by ſeveral perſons, who had given a very terrific account of the ſkeletons in theſe diſmal receſſes; accounts which were now traditional in the neighbouring villages, and were of courſe greatly exaggerated.—The mournful relics that had been ſeen under the earth were imagined to viſit its ſurface, and the place was univerſally believed to be haunted. The ſtyle of the building that remained, where light was admitted through long windows obſcured by pieces of coloured glaſs, and now darkened by the ivy that mantled almoſt the whole edifice; the walls of great thickneſs, in ſome places green with the damps that continually ſtreamed from the roof, in others marked with the remains of Latin ſentences, ſurrounding the half-effaced repreſentations of the crucifixion, all contributed to give an air of wildneſs and horror to this almoſt-deſerted building;

ing; where, though at the Reformation, as it is called, under Henry the Eighth, it became a pariſh church, yet ſervice was performed in it only once a year, as a mere matter of form, for the pariſh contained only the houſe of Holmwood, and three cottages belonging to my father, and ſince pulled down. So that when it was his pleaſure to deſtroy this ſmall church entirely, and unite the pariſh it belonged to with another, there were none to oppoſe the act of parliament he ſolicited and obtained for that purpoſe. At the time, however, of which I am ſpeaking, this deſolate ſpot inſpired all that melancholy ſort of horror which naturally gives riſe to the reports of ſupernatural appearences; there was not a ſervant who would on any account have gone thither of a night, and even the gardeners and workmen, who were at any time occupied near it, related ſtrange ſtories of uncommon noiſes, as of mourning and complaint, and more than once have ran in terror to their fellow labourers, declaring

claring that ſome obſcure figures had iſſued from the vaults beneath, and then melted into air.

" Such was the ſtern ſpirit of my father, and he ſo little knew how to make allowances for any weakneſs which he had never felt, that had any domeſtic betrayed fears of this ſort before him, they would have been diſmiſſed with diſgrace; nor did my brother and I, while children, though we knew all the legends of the country, ever dare to ſpeak to him of the ſtories we had been taught. Thus compelled to ſtifle our infantine fears, they were gradually ſubdued as our reaſon became ſtronger; and *we* were accuſtomed not only to find our way in the dark all over the extenſive old buildings of Holmwood, but to traverſe without fear the avenue that led to, and even the area that ſurrounded, the ruined church, though we credited the probable account, that in the vaults beneath reſted the remains of the former inhabitants of the decayed monaſtery.

"At the time I am now ſpeaking of, I mean about ſix weeks after the departure of Ormſby, ſuch was the gloomy temper of my ſoul, that I was pleaſed only with horrors, and it was through the avenue of elms, and towards the ruins that I now frequently directed my ſolitary walk. I obſerved, however, that when, in compliance with Helene's earneſt entreaty, I told her which way I was going, ſhe ſhuddered and turned pale; and if I ſeemed diſpoſed to go thither, when ſhe was with me, ſhe would find every poſſible excuſe, ſuch as that it was dewy from the high graſs, or dirty, or the wind was in our faces, or any other objection ſhe could raiſe againſt our taking that path; but none ſeemed to ſuit *me* ſo well..... I found a melancholy ſort of ſatisfaction in indulging the ſad thoughts that inceſſantly preſſed on my mind, in a place where I was ſure none would interrupt my ſorrows: even the labourer, fatigued with the toils of the day, or the benighted traveller from one village to another, would

would not, to ſave a longer journey, croſs my father's grounds near this place. An adventurous ſportſman, perhaps, might violate the gloomy ſhade with his gun; but, at the ſeaſon of which I now ſpeak, the end of December, even the hoſtile ſounds of field ſports were ſeldom heard—a dreary and mournful ſilence reigned around Holmwood, for it was long ſince the voice of hoſpitality or gaiety had been heard. The rooks returning in the evening to the high elm trees that led to the church-yard, and the owls that inhabited the ivies that half mantled it, ſeemed to be the only living creatures that could endure the melancholy ſolitude.

"My father, who had at this time an interval of eaſe, though the aſperities of his temper were now ſeldom mitigated, ſometimes releaſed me from my attendance after dinner early enough to allow me to take my ſolitary walk before it was too dark.

"The intelligence I had received on this particular evening from Mr. Hay-

ward, that he had heard Mrs. Leſſington would be at home in two or three days, had given ſome relief to my ſpirits, and, rather leſs oppreſſed than uſual, I ſtrolled almoſt mechanically up the avenues. It was a calm and ſtill evening—ſo ſtill, indeed, that every bird was heard whoſe ſlender feet perched on the leafleſs boughs, or flitted among them, and the bells of the ſheep folding in the diſtant fields, and the remoter ſound of a mill and mill ſtream, were brought in low murmurs to the ear.

" The well-known objects around me were becoming indiſtinct, but I continued to walk ſlowly on—I even ſat down for a few moments on the remains of a ruſtic tomb, and liſtened to the dull ſighing of the wind as it ſung round the buttreſſes, and waved the black boughs of the old yew tree. As I ſat muſing, I recollected the ſtories I had often heard of ſpectres being ſeen, and ſtrange noiſes being heard round theſe receptacles of the dead.—— So little pleaſure had I in looking forward

to

to any thing that life could now afford me, ſo long had my thoughts been accuſtomed to conſider death as the only end of all my miſeries, that I felt no horror in the idea of ſeeing, or, if it were poſſible, of converſing with departed ſpirits. A ſort of chilly and ſhuddering ſenſation, however, warned me to return before it was quite dark to the houſe. I aroſe from the maſs of broken ſtone on which I had been ſitting, and, advancing a few paces to return into the elm avenue, I fancied I ſaw a form glide before me among the trunks of the trees; but beneath the trees it was ſo dark, that I could not diſtinguiſh what it was. I continued, however, to gaze ſteadily on the place where I fancied this ſhape had appeared: the illuſion was over—I ſaw nothing. Without any emotion of fear I proceeded, therefore, exactly to that ſpot, for it was my direct path to the houſe; I entered it, and, looking down the avenue, again fancied I ſaw an object moving at a diſtance about fifty

yards beyond me; but almoſt immediately my attention was attracted by ſomething white that lay juſt before me in the path. It ſeemed to be a book, a letter, or a folded handkerchief: I ſtooped and took it up—it was a ſheet of paper, folded like a large letter, and tied with a bit of black ribband. The circumſtance rather ſurpriſed than alarmed me: I wondered what it could be, becauſe I knew that the path was never frequented, or at leaſt never by perſons who were likely to drop a paper. I put it into my pocket, and went haſtily towards the houſe; when I got thither, I found my father had been inquiring for me, and I ſoon diſcovered that his temper was much diſturbed..... For more than two hours I was compelled to ſtay with him, and to liſten to reproaches and ſarcaſms uttered with the utmoſt ill-humour. Alas! I ſhould have borne theſe more calmly, had I not felt that I deſerved his indignation; but now they pierced my very ſoul.—At length, however,

ever, I was diſmiſſed to my own room, where the viſion, or fancied viſion, of the evening, immediately recurring to me, I haſtily drew the paper from my pocket. Ah, Roſalie! imagine the ſenſations with which I read theſe lines——

'Vivo oh Dio!—ma più non ti vedrò— Prima di ſcriverti in queſto modo, penſa quante pene, e quanti martiri biſogna aver ſofferti, o più toſto che il tuo bel cor non fa rifleſſione ſopra la noſtra ſorte tiranna Abbia cura della tua prezioza ſalute; ora non ſi puo far 'altro per il sventurato O.'

'I exiſt—but we never meet again!— Think what I muſt have endured before I could write thus, or rather do not reflect on our inevitable miſeries, but take care of your health—it is all you can now do for the unhappy O.'

"The writing appeared to be Ormſby's; but the lines were crooked, and the letters ill-formed, as if they had been traced by a weak and uncertain hand. As I gazed on the paper, that, and every object round

me, ſwam before my eyes——again I read the words, again attempted to recal what I had ſeen, or ſuppoſed I had ſeen, in the elm walk, and it ſeemed poſſible that it was Ormſby himſelf—for who elſe could have appeared there?—Yet, from whence did he come?—Where had he ſo long been confined, or how could he now eſcape?—If it were indeed himſelf, why did he not approach?—if it had been but to have ſpoken one word to me, with the aſſurance that he lived.....Ah! it could not be Ormſby!—Ormſby would never have ſeen me ſo near him, and have left me to tears, conjectures, and terrors; but if it were not himſelf, who could have been in the avenue?—Who could have written the billet I found there, in a language in which, though Ormſby himſelf was only a ſcholar, no other perſon in the houſe, except my father and the Abbé Hayward, knew a ſyllable?—Who was likely to write a hand reſembling Ormſby's?—Who, indeed, except my father, whoſe fingers being entirely diſabled by

the

the gout, had almoſt always employed Ormſby to write, knew his hand well enough to attempt an imitation of it?—Any conjecture that led to a ſuppoſition of its being a forgery, ſeemed even more improbable than that it ſhould be Ormſby himſelf—if any thing could be more improbable than that he was ſo greatly changed as to be ſo near me, and yet fly from me. This uncertainty, and my own conjectures, equally endleſs and uncertain, ſoon became ſo inſupportable, that my reaſon once more threatened to forſake me, and I believe I ſhould have loſt it, had I not communicated to Helene what had happened, and explained to her the purport of the letter. As I did this, I obſerved her countenance change; ſhe grew pale and trembled—then, in an hurried way, ſaid in her own language, that I ſhould recollect how often ſhe had entreated of me not to go into the elm walk—not to frequent the ruins about the chapel.

"I eagerly inquired what thoſe precautions had to do with what I was now talking of. Helene, trembling and weeping, at length told me, it was the general opinion in the family, that Mr. Ormſby had been killed in attempting to reſiſt the force that was uſed to remove him from the houſe; that he was buried in the vaults under the old church and ruined monaſtery; and that his ſpirit had been frequently ſeen ſince. This at once accounted for the apprehenſions I had ſeen Helene ſo often expreſs, and renewed all the terrors for the life of Ormſby, which the aſſurances of Mr. Hayward had a little appeaſed..... My heart ſunk within me, and again I ſeemed to be on the point of loſing my miſery and my exiſtence together. The horrible idea thus conveyed, could not be a moment ſuſtained without forcing the mind to an effort for its own relief. The moment I had recovered myſelf enough to reflect, my reaſon returned to diſſipate this hideous

deous phantacy. I might have believed that I had ſeen the ſhade of Ormſby lingering about the place of his interment—for to what weakneſs might not ſuch ſufferings as I underwent ſubject the underſtanding? but I knew that the ſpirit of the dead write no letters, and by whom but Ormſby could the lines I held have been written? Who, but either himſelf, or ſome agent he had employed, could have dropped the unſealed paper I had found? As ſoon as the tumult of my ſpirits were a little calmed by theſe reflections, I took courage to queſtion Helene farther on the reports that had paſſed on this ſubject in the family.

"She told me that ever ſince the ſudden diſappearance of my unhappy lover, ſtrange ſtories had been whiſpered in the family at every opportunity, when the inferior domeſtics had an opportunity of eſcaping from the obſervation of the ſteward and houſekeeper; that the moſt frightful reports had got abroad in the

country; and that it was every where believed that Mr. Ormſby had fallen the victim of my father's violence, and had been buried in the vaults: a report which was the more ſtrongly credited, as the two men who diſappeared with him had never returned. To this account, which was nearly the ſame in ſubſtance as that which ſhe had at firſt related, ſhe added many wild ſtories of noiſes heard, and fights ſeen, every one of which ſome perſon might be brought to atteſt. Nothing could be more dreadful than to reflect on theſe impreſſions among the neighbours, which, from the account given by Helene, ſeemed to be gaining ground, and might not improbably bring on ſome inquiry that might irritate to phrenzy ſuch a temper as my father's, and overwhelm me with ſhame and diſgrace."

The recollection of this part of her life, added to the fatigue of having ſpoken ſo long, was more than Mrs. Vyvian could now ſuſtain; and Roſalie once more prevailed

vailed upon her to delay the reſt of her ſtrange and melancholy narrative till the next day, which was likely to be the laſt they ſhould uninterruptedly paſs together.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVII.

THE narrative of Mrs. Vyvian thus went on——

" I had not yet recovered any degree of compoſure after the ſtrange circumſtance of finding the letter, which I continually read and ſtudied, when ſome of the apprehenſions, to which the intelligence I had got from Helene had given riſe, were but too fatally realiſed. Such, indeed, were the various tortures in which I had been kept for ſome time, that it is aſtoniſhing, in the ſituation I was in, how I ſurvived it. I might well, in the words of a favourite air which I ſhould have ſung, had not my heart been too heavy to find relief even in muſic——

La ſciami,

Laſciami*, o Ciel! pietoſo,
Si non ti vuoi placar,
Laſciami reſpirar,
Qualche momento!

Rendaſi col ripoſo,
Almeno il mio penſiar,
Abile a ſoſtenar,
Nuovo tormento.——

"I know not whether my mind dwelt moſt continually on the circumſtance of the letter, or on the dread of the inquiry that might be made from the reports that had been ſpread in the country. In regard to this laſt, however, I endeavoured to perſuade myſelf, that Helene, underſtanding Engliſh imperfectly, might miſconceive or exaggerate the expreſſions made uſe of by the reſt of the ſervants; and while I attempted to mitigate part of my anxiety by this perſuaſion, I endea-

* Metaſtaſio.

voured

voured to acquire courage to inveſtigate the grounds of the other; and for this purpoſe I took again and again the ſame walk alone, for not even Helene's ſincere attachment to me would, I knew, have engaged her to have accompanied me without great reluctance. I thought too, that if by any ſtrange means which I could not comprehend, nor hardly think poſſible, Ormſby yet lingered round Holmwood, he would be prevented by the preſence of a third perſon from ſpeaking to me. Life was now in my eyes of ſo little value, that to fear, unleſs it were fear of my father, I was inſenſible; and I believe that I ſhould have met with indifference, or rather torpor, the moſt terrific figures that imagination has ever dreſſed out to deter from crimes, or to enforce repentance. In my ſolitary and gloomy walks, however, I ſaw no more any object like that which had before alarmed me, nor did I hear any noiſe but ſuch as I could eaſily account for. Every evening, without any regard to the weather, or to any

thing

thing but the precautions neceſſary in regard to my father, I took the ſame lonely walk, and for many evenings returned more aſtoniſhed and depreſſed; for the longer this myſtery remained unexplained, the more I became the prey of wild conjectures and tormenting ſolicitude.

" But imagine, my Roſalie, if it be poſſible, imagine what I ſuffered, when, about five days after the circumſtance of my finding the letter, I was alarmed by the ſudden entrance of Helene into my room, who, breathleſs with ſome new terror, endeavoured to explain ſomething, which it was long before I underſtood. At length I made out, that a neighbouring gentleman in the commiſſion was come, as the ſervants believed, to apprehend my father with peace officers, for that a regular complaint had been laid, it was not known by whom, of the ſudden diſappearance of Ormſby; and at length, the accuſation of having murdered him had been ſo often repeated, and the clamours of the country,

where

where certainly my father had many enemies, had become ſo loud, that the gentleman in queſtion could act no otherwiſe than he did.

" Endeavour to imagine what I endured while ſuch a conference as this laſted, which it did for upwards of two hours; at the end of that time, the magiſtrates and his myrmidons departed together. Helene, who had watched them, came to tell me ſo: they had been out for ſome time with the ſteward and the old butler, and ſhe was ſure, ſhe ſaid, they had been up to the church; then they returned to the houſe, and, after a few moments of farther converſation with my father, quitted Holmwood apparently ſatisfied.

" So confuſed, ſo mingled with horror and amazement, were all my ideas, that I recollect nothing of what paſſed in my mind, till I ſaw myſelf ſeated at table as uſual to help my father, who ſat oppoſite in his great chair; when I falteringly made the uſual inquiry of the day, he did

not

not anſwer me. I began, however, to carve as uſual for him, but he fixed his eyes on my face, with a look ſo menacing and ſtern, that it was with the utmoſt difficulty I ſupported myſelf.... I looked in vain for comfort in the faces around me; the old butler looked as if he pitied, but could not aſſiſt me; and the footman ſeemed to be under ſuch terror, that having made two or three awkward blunders, he received a very ſevere reprimand, and was ordered to leave the room. Our ſilent and melancholy meal was ſoon over, for my father eat little, and I in vain attempted to ſwallow. The table cloth was removed, and I collected voice enough to aſk him, as nearly as I could in my uſual manner, whether I ſhould read to him?—He anſwered loudly and angrily—No———

"Then, after a pauſe, a dreadful pauſe, during which I was afraid I ſhould have ſunk upon the floor, my father ſpoke thus——

'It

'If I thought only for one moment, that the infamous reports, which have gone forth in the country, had originated in your folly, or rather wickedneſs, I ſhould not heſitate what to do. As for the ungrateful villain, who might, perhaps, have had the inſolence to attempt, as a return for my receiving him into my houſe, to ſteal my daughter and my property from it, you will never ſee him or hear of him more, nor can a matter of ſelf-defence be again tortured into what the laws might *here* call a crime; but for yourſelf, know that it is my pleaſure that you immediately prepare to receive, as your huſband, a friend of mine, whoſe eſtate is ſuch as you have no pretenſions to expect, unleſs it be as my daughter—I will not ſuffer myſelf to ſuppoſe you have forfeited that title—on your part you will be pleaſed to make up your mind, and to diveſt yourſelf of a manner and behaviour which I will ſuffer no longer: I ſhould have forborne to have given you my commands in regard to Mr. Vyvian, till his arrival, if I had

had not remarked your perſeverance in a ſort of conduct which *I will not underſtand*, leſt the moſt terrible vengeance ſhould follow.....I have ſaid enough—go to your own room, and learn to obey.'

" This terrible ſentence, which ended in ſo loud a tone as almoſt to ſtun me, deprived me for a moment of my recollection; as ſoon, however, as I was able, I aroſe from my chair, and with difficulty reached the door, my father's eyes following me with a look ſo ſcrutinizing and angry, that I wiſhed at that moment the earth might open beneath my feet and ſwallow me for ever. I found Helene near the door; for, alarmed by the tranſactions of the morning, and probably by the report of the footman, ſhe waited there for me—without her aid I ſhould never have got to my own room. I ſat down in a ſtate of torpid deſpair, which it is impoſſible to deſcribe. Helene ſpoke to me in vain. The words I had heard, the dreadful command I had received, ſtill vibrated in my ears, and the horrors

of

of my fate were ſo forcibly preſented to my mind, that the few diſtinct thoughts that paſſed through it pointed to ſuicide as the only way to eſcape from a deſtiny I was utterly unable to ſupport. At length the tears and prayers of my faithful Helene reſtored to me ſome degree of recollection; ſhe knelt at my feet, imploring me to have mercy on myſelf and on my infant, and to exert myſelf, if it were only to ſave my father from the crimes to which his furious revenge might excite him. She endeavoured to perſuade me, that what he had ſaid of Mr. Vyvian might be only a fineſſe; or, that if there was ſuch a marriage in agitation, I might delay or eſcape it by the interpoſition of Mrs. Leſſington, who was probably by this time, or would be in a few days, within four miles, and from whoſe prudence, as well as influence over the mind of my father, much might be hoped.

"Though I knew great part of this reaſoning was fallacious, I affected to be more calm, that Helene, who would not be

be diſmiſſed, might talk to me no longer; but what a night did I paſs! and when I obtained by opiate half an hour of unquiet ſlumber, with what anguiſh did I recollect, the moment I awoke, all that had paſſed the preceding day, with what dread look forward to what might befal me in that which was begun.

" One conſolatory circumſtance happened in the morning, which enabled me to go through it; I received a letter from Mrs. Leſſington, to inform me ſhe was arrived at home, and would ſee me the next day. This proſpect of alleviating my ſufferings gave me the power of going down to dinner with ſome degree of reſolution—I even took courage to meet the piercing eye of my ſevere, my ſometimes cruel father, and to repeat, when dinner was over, my queſtion, whether I ſhould read to him?—He again anſwered, No—though with leſs harſhneſs than the evening before: he felt himſelf indiſpoſed, and ſaid he ſhould endeavour to ſleep.

" I no

" I no ſooner had left him, than in deſpite of the earneſt entreaty of Helene, who inceſſantly beſought me to have more regard to my own ſafety, I went into the avenue, though it was nearly dark; an early moon, however, lit up, with faint but cheering radiance, the winter ſky, and her rays glancing through the leafleſs trees, and falling on the gray trunks of a few arbeals and birches that were ſcattered among the more gloomy elms towards the middle of the line, I could have indulged my ſhuddering fancy in ſuppoſing them, indiſtinctly ſeen as they were, to be ſpectres beckoning me to the only ſure aſylum of all ſorrows in the cemetery beyond.

" Why ſhould thoſe fear who have nothing to hope?—Of beings of this world I had no dread, for I was ſo miſerable that religion only arreſted my feeble hands, or they would have been lifted againſt a life which might have been called a living death; ſupernatural beings I had never learned

learned to fear—if ſuch were ever permitted to appear, I hoped it might be with tidings of mercy. Thus arguing and reflecting, I had reached the top of the avenue, and ſtood a moment looking at the half-ruined church, and meditating on the horrible idea taken up by the people of the country, that Ormſby was deſtroyed and buried in this place..... What an opinion muſt they have of the violence and ferocity of my father's ſpirit! What an idea of the provocation he had received, before they could have ſuppoſed him likely to be driven to extremities ſo dangerous and dreadful!—It was impoſſible but what the cauſe for ſuch vengeance muſt be ſuſpected. The ſecret of our attachment, my diſgrace and ſhame, then were known, or, what was nearly the ſame thing, gueſſed at, though I no longer ſuppoſed it poſſible that my father could for a moment harbour a thought ſo contrary to humanity as the deſtruction of the unhappy Ormſby; yet there were a thouſand daggers for my heart in the

reflection that ſuch a hiſtory was the converſation of the ſurrounding country, and that the real or imaginary crimes of our family were diſcuſſed by the ignorant, and enjoyed by the malicious.

" But even theſe reflections were eaſe compared to thoſe that aſſailed me when I remembered the converſation of the evening before, and repeated to myſelf the dreadful name of Vyvian.—There is a kind and a degree of grief that annihilates the feelings from its violent preſſure, as the extremities of bodily pain are ſaid to deprive the ſufferer of ſenſation. This was the effect which the commands of my father had on my mind, now that alone, and amidſt the ſilence of the night, I reflected on them—loſt in the terrible contemplation of the future, I forgot the preſent, and was unconſcious of the dreary ſcene around me, till I was ſtartled from my reverie by the ſight of a man, who, coming from among the ruins, ſlowly approached. Rivetted to the ſpot by fear, mingled with a ſtrange deſire to know whether

ther this was a being of another world, or whether it brought me intelligence of Ormſby, I had no power to ſtir. The figure approached, and, as if encouraged by my remaining where I was, ſpoke to me in a low voice, and ſaid ſomething as if entreating me not to be alarmed; but I heard only the beginning of the ſentence; the voice was, I thought, Ormſby's, and a thouſand ſenſations, which I could neither diſcriminate then, nor can deſcribe now, contributed to deprive me of my ſenſes. The predominant idea, however, was, the hazard Ormſby was in, in thus returning round the houſe, for of any ſupernatural appearance I had none.

"On recovering ſome degree of recollection, I found myſelf on the ground, and a man kneeling by me, whom I ſtill believed to be Ormſby, till he explained himſelf nearly in theſe words——

'I have long waited for an opportunity of ſpeaking to you, Miſs Montalbert—recover your recollection—your preſence

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of mind——the life of Ormſby depends on you.'

'Of Ormſby?' cried I faintly.

'Of Ormſby! (anſwered he)—my unfortunate brother..... It is you who muſt either releaſe him; who muſt either reſtore him to life and liberty, or condemn him to end his miſerable days in poverty and impriſonment.'—I have not ſtrength, Roſalie, to relate every word as it paſſed; ſuffice it therefore to tell you, that it was one of the brothers of poor, unhappy Ormſby, who related, that he had come from Ireland on finding that my father had impriſoned Ormſby for debt; and that he had declared to the elder Mr. Ormſby by letter, that he never would releaſe him, unleſs, under the moſt poſitive promiſe, that he would go immediately to India—never again ſee or correſpond with me, and renounce, in the moſt ſolemn manner, every claim that I might have given him to my perſon or my affections. This Ormſby had poſitively refuſed to do.

My

My father, irritated to phrenzy by a circumſtance that renewed all his ſuſpicions, declared, in terms of the greateſt violence, that Ormſby ſhould periſh in priſon. His father could do nothing for him; but ſent over his ſecond ſon, only two years older than Ormſby, to endeavour to appeaſe the anger of Mr. Montalbert, by engaging his brother to make the conceſſions that were required of him.

'I have now (ſaid the young man) lingered about the place more than a fortnight, in hopes of having an opportunity of ſpeaking to you. At the riſk of my life I have attempted to make my way into the houſe, and probably have owed my preſervation to the notion impreſſed upon your father's ſervants, that the reſtleſs ſpirit of my brother, whom they ſuppoſed to have been murdered, haunted the houſe and gardens. . . . . Now, deareſt Madam, (continued George Ormſby), if you have, indeed, honoured my brother with your regard, reſolve to ſave him—reſolve to reſtore to my poor, unhappy

parents the peace this fatal circumſtance has robbed them of.'——I aſked faintly, what I could do?—He anſwered, that by conſenting to marry the man propoſed to me by my father, I ſhould end at once the perſecution of Ormſby, and ſecure my own peace—I ſhuddered, and was on the point of declaring why it was impoſſible for me to do this, when the noiſe of voices at a diſtance compelled him haſtily to quit me. He retired again among the ruins, and I, without knowing how I found ſtrength, walked towards the houſe. I met Helene and one of the men ſervants coming in ſearch of me: Helene, in accoſting me, trembled ſo ſhe could hardly ſpeak—I leaned on her arm and reached the houſe, where I had again to encounter the angry looks and fierce interrogatories of my father. I know not how I anſwered; overwhelmed by the ſcene I had juſt paſſed, I ſunk once more under the violent agitation of my mind, and could hardly be ſaid to be ſenſible till the ſoothing voice of Mrs. Leſſington,

at

at my bedſide the next morning, reſtored me in ſome meaſure to my reaſon. But notwithſtanding the perfect reliance I had on her friendſhip, I ſhould never have had courage to relate to this dear friend the extent of my imprudence and its conſequences; but Helene had already told her ſo much, that ſhe entered at once upon the ſubject as ſoon as I appeared in a ſtate to attend to her; by transferring the blame from me to my father, ſhe reconciled me in ſome meaſure to myſelf, and, with ſome degree of compoſure, I ſuffered her to ſpeak of what could be done in circumſtances ſo dreadful and diſtreſſing.

"Nothing, however, could be immediately determined upon. I agreed with her, that it was neceſſary her huſband ſhould know my cruel embarraſſment, for without his aſſiſtance and participation ſhe could do nothing. She gave me in the mean time every conſolation in her power; but I thought I perceived, not-

withſtanding ſhe evaded the converſation, that ſhe thought I ought to relinquiſh every idea of ever again ſeeing Ormſby, and that if I could eſcape from the perils of my preſent melancholy ſituation, I ſhould diſpoſe myſelf to act in compliance with my father's commands.

"Many were the conferences we now had; but probably it would have been impoſſible to have ſaved me from that death, which my father might have thought could alone wipe away the diſhonour I had brought upon his family, had not Providence interfered in my favour.

"Mrs. Leſſington now met and converſed with George Ormſby: they agreed that the only means of ſaving his brother was to procure his renunciation of every pretenſion to me in whatever form my father ſhould dictate. This I alone could engage him to do, and this at length Mrs. Leſſington extorted from me in a few lines, by which I *aſked* this of him—with a trembling hand, and eyes overflowing with

with tears, I ſigned the fatal paper. Mrs. Leſſington aſſured me George Ormſby went immediately with it to London.—In about ten days afterwards, Mrs. Leſſington, who remained at Holmwood, informed me ſhe had heard from him; that his brother Charles was releaſed, and on his voyage to India. There was ſomething in all this that I could not comprehend; but I dared not truſt myſelf either with inquiries or with conjectures—Ormſby was loſt to me for ever, and I, ſometimes in the bitterneſs of my ſoul, accuſed him of having abandoned me, though, in more reaſonable moments, I was compelled to acknowledge that his ſtay would have been deſtructive to us both.... My father, who, as it appeared from his conduct, knew much of the truth, though the loſs of my honour was yet unknown to him, became ſomewhat leſs ſevere towards me; yet I ſhrunk more than ever from his eye, and my timidity and terror muſt have betrayed me, if the change in my perſon, now every day more

evident, could have eſcaped obſervation; but, whether it was that the violence of temper, which my father had yielded to in regard to Ormſby, had aggravated his arthritic complaints, or whether his conſtitution was breaking entirely up, he became at this period ſo ill, that a phyſician, who had always ſucceſsfully attended him, was ſent for from London; he gave him ſome relief, but declared, that unleſs he went to town, where conſtant attendance could be given him, the conſequence would be greatly to be apprehended.

"The reſult of this advice was, that we removed to London. Thither alſo my friends Mr. and Mrs. Leſſington removed; and Mrs. Leſſington being then near her time, it was ſo managed, that when the hour arrived when you, my beloved child, came into the world, you were concealed by Mrs. Leſſington for three weeks, and then produced as twin with the daughter of which ſhe was delivered, who is ſince dead.

"You

" You may imagine, my Roſalie, how very difficult it was to conceal the fatal ſecret of your birth—you may imagine, for I cannot deſcribe, what were the terrors I had to encounter—the anguiſh of heart with which, when I had once beheld you, once preſſed you to my heart, I ſaw you torn from me, and knew that I ſhould never dare to call you mine, or again to ſhed over you the tears excited by the reſemblance your infant features bore to thoſe of your father.

"But, on calmer reflection, I agreed with Mrs. Leſſington, who repreſented to me inceſſantly, how thankful I ought to be for the good fortune with which I had ſaved my reputation, if not my life. The ſuſpicions that had been entertained, in conſequence of my father's violent conduct towards Ormſby, were now, ſhe ſaid, blown over and forgotten. His family had reported, that ſo far from his having undergone any perſecution from Mr. Montalbert, it was to him he was obliged for

the advantageous ſituation in which he was gone out to India; that the circumſtances which had given riſe to ſuch ſtrange reports in the neighbourhood of Holmwood originated in error and miſrepreſentation; and, in a word, that the Ormſbys, inſtead of ſhewing any reſentment towards my father, every where made his eulogium as the benefactor of the whole family. I was not, however, the leſs miſerable, though I owned the truth of all Mrs. Leſſington urged; and whenever I was alone, I gave way to that anguiſh of heart, which, while I was with her, I endeavoured to repreſs or conceal, becauſe I would not be thought ungrateful, or inſenſible of the obligations I owed to her friendſhip.

" During my father's very ſevere illneſs, I heard no more of Mr. Vyvian—Indeed I ſeldom ſaw my father, and when it was unavoidable, only for a few minutes. Mrs. Leſſington, in whom he had great confidence, and expreſſed a regard unuſual for

for him to feel, had contrived to obtain his leave for me to ſtay with her while ſhe was very ill and unable to come to me, and by this management only it was that I eſcaped obſervation at the period when I could ſo little bear it. As my father recovered, however, my more conſtant attendance was again neceſſary. He now ſometimes ordered me to read to him, and, when he was ſtill more at eaſe, to play at cheſs with him. I was, indeed, but a poor ſubſtitute for Ormſby or Mr. Hayward; but I fancied that the latter ſometimes got out of the way, as if on purpoſe to make me more neceſſary to my father, and to leave us together.

" It was in one of theſe tête-à-tête parties, that my father, without much ceremony or much preface, aſked me, whether I had reflected on what he had determined upon in regard to Mr. Vyvian, who would now in a few days be in England, whither he came on purpoſe to receive my hand?

" The

"The violent effect of this intelligence was evident on my countenance—I tried in vain to ſpeak; my lips refuſed to articulate a ſyllable. Not only diſregarding, but enraged at the pain I ſeemed to feel, he declared, in a voice that made me tremble like a leaf, that if I did not determine to obey without remonſtrance, or heſitation, he knew how to puniſh, and *would* puniſh me as I deſerved. He added, that *I* had already been the occaſion of his undergoing uneaſineſs, which had brought on his late illneſs; of ſcenes the moſt diſgraceful to his character, never ſullied till he found a curſe inſtead of a bleſſing in his daughter; and that not content with having once been nearly the cauſe of his death, I now was diſpoſed to complete my work, and deſtroy him who had given me life.——Figure to yourſelf, if it be poſſible, what I endured at this moment, and, if it be poſſible to carry your imagination farther, ſuppoſe what I muſt have ſuffered before I was compelled to

give

give my hand to Mr. Vyvian, while my heart was devoted to Ormſby; while I would moſt willingly have ſhared with him the moſt obſcure deſtiny; while I would have followed him to India, or to Nova Zembla, and have expoſed myſelf to endure any hardſhips in any region of the world, rather than have been miſtreſs of the world on condition of being the wife of Mr. Vyvian.

" My friend Mrs. Leſſington, however, and the Abbé Hayward, joined in this cruel perſecution. The former removed you from my ſight entirely, and ſent you into the country; the latter ſeemed to have loſt his uſual humanity and tenderneſs, and to think that duty, which I had once violated, had now ſtronger claims upon me than before the fatal indiſcretion I had been guilty of. From your father I heard nothing. His family reported every where that he was married to a woman of fortune, with whom he became acquainted on her voyage to India, whither ſhe was ſent for by an uncle, whoſe heireſs

heireſs ſhe was. This I believed, as I had done many other ſtories that were among the artifices that were uſed to force me into this deteſted marriage. They ſucceeded but too well, or rather the extreme terror I had of my father left me no means of eſcape. I became then the wife of Mr. Vyvian. I have been ever ſince the moſt miſerable of women; my ſon only, and the conſolation of having ſacrificed myſelf to duty, alone ſupported me. Before, however, I was driven into this miſerable union, I executed, as I was then of age, a deed of gift, in which I made over, during my life, to Mr. and Mrs. Leſſington, the intereſt of four thouſand pounds, which was the gift of a relation, and which I poſſeſſed independent of my father, but without the power of alienating the principal. This is part of the money which Mr. Vyvian has ſo often reproached me with *waſting*, as he terms it, on begging monks and canting hypocrites; though, had I really beſtowed it on my neceſſitous fellow creatures, I ſhould have thought

thought myſelf well juſtified in ſuch a diſpoſal of it.

" I had not been married above fifteen months when my father died, and left Mr. Vyvian in poſſeſſion of that fortune, which was undoubtedly his chief motive for overlooking my reluctance which I repeatedly avowed to him, and which he well knew accompanied me to the altar. After my father's death, he no longer affected to treat me with the leaſt degree of regard. We went abroad for ſome years, which ſerved in ſome meaſure to relieve and diſſipate the heavineſs of my heart. I had often the conſolation of hearing from Mrs. Leſſington, and in her letters, with the account ſhe gave me of her family, my Roſalie, as one of that family, was always mentioned. When I returned to England, I found you, child of my fond affections, all that my fancy could form of lovelineſs and perfection. So many tears had my fatal error coſt me, and ſo much I hoped had been expiated by the ſubſequent ſacrifice I made,

that

that I truſted it was not criminal to indulge myſelf with a ſight of you: you know how eaſily I enjoyed that happineſs, but *I* only knew what exquiſite happineſs it was till you grew up, and till Charles, returning from abroad, ſhewed ſo much partiality for you, as made me tremble for the conſequence. This fear, which a thouſand circumſtances contributed to irritate, rendered my life miſerable—I thought, that as the heavieſt puniſhment it could inflict, Heaven might permit a fatal paſſion to take place between you. This was the cauſe not only of the deep melancholy into which I fell, but of conduct which you then thought and I felt to be unkind and cruel."

Mrs. Vyvian here ended her long narrative, and, kiſſing the tears from the cheeks of her daughter, ſhe diſmiſſed her for that day, referring till the next any farther converſation in regard to Montalbert.

CHAP. XVIII.

AT home and alone Roſalie had time to reflect on the ſtory ſhe had heard; and though ſhe knew very little of the world, and Mrs. Vyvian had failed to be very minute in many parts of her ſtory, it ſeemed certain that the family of Mr. Ormſby had been the principal inſtruments in terrifying her into a marriage, which would have rendered her life miſerable even if her heart and her perſon had not belonged to another. The Italian letter, which was probably written in that language leſt it ſhould fall into other hands, and might have been read had it been in Engliſh; the improbability that George Ormſby ſhould venture to appear about Holmwood, unleſs with the connivance of ſome of the family, if not of Mr. Montalbert;

talbert; and the eagerneſs with which Mrs. Leſſington and Mr. Hayward had adopted the views of Mr. Montalbert, though they knew her ſituation, were a combination of circumſtances which ſeemed to leave no doubt in the mind of Roſalie but that her mother had been betrayed by ſome or all of thoſe whom ſhe conſidered as her beſt friends. Their motives were probably good; but Roſalie could not help reflecting, that had not ſuch been their conduct, ſhe might now have been the acknowledged daughter of the moſt tender and affectionate of mothers; ſhe might have known and been bleſſed by the fondneſs and protection of her father; and they might in a happy union have effaced the remembrance of their early indiſcretion, for the death of Mr. Montalbert would ſoon have left his daughter at liberty, and her life would not have been paſſed in the miſeries of ſuch a marriage, nor her ſpirits have been overwhelmed with the conſciouſneſs of being the wife of one man while her whole heart was anothers.

" I ſhould

" I ſhould not then, (ſaid Roſalie, as ſhe conſidered theſe events), I ſhould not then have been deſpicable in the eyes of Montalbert's relations—I might have been received by *his* mother with pride and pleaſure, from the hands of my own; but now I am an outcaſt, and have no right to claim the protection of any human being, unleſs it be thine, Montalbert, and thou art far, far from me!—Heaven knows whether we ſhall ever meet again!"

A ſhower of tears fell from her eyes while ſhe indulged theſe melancholy thoughts; but, from longer meditation, ſhe was roufed by a ſhort note from Mrs. Vyvian, who informed her, that her daughters had juſt been with her; that they ſhould now ſeldom be at liberty to meet, for that Miſs Vyvian, who, for ſome reaſon or other, did not ſeem happy and ſatisfied with her ſiſter, was to come to her mother during an excurſion Mr. and Mrs. Boſworth were about to make to Scarborough.—" She is my daughter, (ſaid

Mrs.

Mrs. Vyvian), and I cannot refuſe her my protection—alas! I will fulfil to the end of my life the duties that have been impoſed upon me. Hitherto the conſciouſneſs of having acquitted myſelf of a very arduous taſk, to the utmoſt of my power, has ſuſtained me in many an hour of anguiſh; it will ſmooth the bed of death, and no inconvenience I can ſuſtain, no ingratitude with which I may be repaid, ſhall for a moment weaken the reſolution I have made to acquit myſelf to my own conſcience..... Come to me, however, my Roſalie, to-morrow, as Bab will not be here till evening; Mr. Vyvian ſtaid only a day in London. He is now gone into the weſt to viſit the borough for which he is repreſentative, and is afterwards to make I know not what tour, with I know not whom, which is likely to detain him all the ſummer. Alas! I dare not hope that the monotonous life I lead can be pleaſant to Barbara, who probably comes with reluctance that will render us both equally miſerable.

miſerable. How differently, my Roſalie, *could* I indulge myſelf with having you always with me, would our hours paſs; but I will not add a word more on this ſubject."

Roſalie ſaw that, from this unlucky arrangement, ſhe ſhould be deprived of the conſolation ſhe might derive from the advice and converſation of her beſt friend, when ſhe moſt wanted ſuch comforts. The averſion that Barbara Vyvian ſeemed to have to her was even greater than that of Mrs. Boſworth; and on recollecting ſeveral circumſtances that had happened ſince the eſtrangement the ſiſters had ſhewn towards her, Roſalie could not but imagine that they knew, or ſuſpected, her near relationſhip to their mother..... Ingenuous and liberal as her own heart was, ſhe imagined not that it was poſſible for envy only, malignant hatred of ſuperior excellence and beauty, to call forth the ill-humour and provoke the ill-offices of theſe young women, though ſhe had already

already had a ſpecimen of the effect of thoſe odious paſſions in the behaviour of the Miſs Leſſingtons, whom ſhe once thought her ſiſters.

In this family ſhe now ſeemed to be almoſt a ſtranger. The character of Mrs. Leſſington, ſince the death of her huſband, ſeemed totally changed; and her paſſion for cards, and for the ſociety of the ſet of people among whom ſhe now lived, abſorbed almoſt every other feeling but her paſſion for money. To Roſalie ſhe was not only become perfectly indifferent, but ſeemed weary of the taſk of affecting ſentiments ſhe did not feel; from the preſent ſituation of Mrs. Vyvian, it was probable ſhe would never be able to increaſe the annual gift ſhe had made as a conſideration for adopting her daughter, and her former and long attachment to her, ſeemed, if not entirely forgotten, at leaſt inſufficient now to urge her to any exertions of friendſhip and attention. She ſeldom ſaw Mrs. Vyvian, and, when ſhe did,

did, her converſation related entirely to people with whom the latter held no intercourſe, and her viſit appeared to be always a matter of ceremony rather than of choice. Though the ſolitude in which Roſalie was left was infinitely the moſt pleaſing circumſtance of her preſent reſidence, yet ſhe could not but imagine that the ſtyle in which ſhe was treated in the family muſt occaſion ſuſpicions of the truth: the difficulties of concealing for a ſeries of years ſuch a ſecret, appeared the more wonderful the longer ſhe thought of it; but, from theſe meditations on the extraordinary events Mrs. Vyvian had related to her, ſhe recovered herſelf only to reflect on what was to be her future fate. Her mother had been abandoned by the man to whom ſhe had ſacrificed her honour and her peace; and though probably it was to preſerve her life and his own that this ſeparation had been ſubmitted to, though it was certain that compulſion had at firſt been uſed to bring about this cruel ſeparation, and that reaſon and a reſpect

for the object of his unfortunate love had afterwards prevented Mr. Ormſby from making any attempt to write to her, Roſalie could not think, without extreme pain, that even *ſuch* an attachment was not proof againſt time and abſence. Mrs. Vyvian had ſaid, that ſhe believed that though Mr. Ormſby ſtill lived, he had forgotten her entirely; ſhe added, that ſhe moſt ſincerely *hoped he had;* but, as ſhe ſaid this, her tears fell more abundantly, and her heart ſeemed to feel all the bitterneſs that attends the conviction of being forgotten by thoſe we have fondly loved. Roſalie thought that nothing could ever induce her even to *ſay*, that ſhe wiſhed to be forgotten by Montalbert.

It was now ſome weeks ſince ſhe had heard from him. There had even been time for an anſwer to Mrs. Vyvian's letter. Should he long delay anſwering it, what agonies of mind ſhould ſhe not be expoſed to; ſhe trembled to look forward to ſuch a poſſibility, and felt that it would be difficult

difficult for her to exiſt long under doubts of Montalbert's affection.

When ſhe ſaw her mother in the morning, it was with increaſed concern ſhe obſerved the deep dejection into which Mrs. Vyvian had ſunk; the little ſtrength which ſhe had collected to enable her to relate to Roſalie what it was neceſſary ſhe ſhould know, was now exhauſted, and, pale and languid, ſhe appeared to ſuſtain with difficulty the fatigue of leaving her bed to receive her daughters, who were to be with her at noon: the one to take leave of her again for ſome time, the other to become a reſident in a houſe which offered ſcenes ſo different from thoſe to which ſhe had long been accuſtomed.

As the ſight of Roſalie ſeemed rather more deeply to affect than to relieve her mother, ſhe ſhortened her viſit, and returned to her uſual home, where ſhe paſſed the day entirely alone; Mrs. Leſſington and her daughter being both in

town, and not likely to return till the following morning.

In the evening ſhe ſat down to write to Montalbert, and had nearly finiſhed her letter, when a maid (for there were only two female ſervants in the houſe) came to tell her, that there was a perſon at the gate who deſired to ſpeak to her; who, upon her aſking his buſineſs, anſwered that he could communicate it only to herſelf.

As Roſalie had no acquaintance likely to make ſuch a viſit, nor any buſineſs to tranſact, and as ſo near London there is always danger of admitting ſtrangers, ſhe bid the ſervant tell him, ſhe could ſpeak to no perſon with whoſe name and purpoſe ſhe was unacquainted. The girl ſtaid ſome time, and then returned with a piece of paper, on which was written with a pencil, "Be not alarmed—it is Montalbert, who, compelled to return in ſecret, has been to Mrs. Vyvian's, and finds perſons with her before whom it is impoſſible for him to appear."

The

The mingled joy and ſurpriſe, not without ſome alloy of fear, with which Roſalie read this, may be eaſily imagined; but it would be more difficult to deſcribe, in adequate terms, the tranſports of Montalbert on meeting after ſo long an abſence, or with what tenderneſs and gratitude Roſalie learned the purpoſe of his journey. As ſoon as they were calm enough to converſe upon it, he told her that as ſoon as he had received Mrs. Vyvian's letter, he determined to come over himſelf to England at every hazard.—"It was not very eaſy, (ſaid he), to prevail on my mother, who has, unluckily for me, projects in her head for eſtabliſhing my fortune, which made her more unwilling to allow of my abſence; but a young Sicilian nobleman, with whom I was brought up, and who is diſtantly related to my mother, was exactly at that period returning to Sicily for a few months. I communicated my diſtreſs to him, and he managed the difficulty ſo well, that I ob-

tained a ſhort leave of abſence, and am now ſuppoſed to be with him in Sicily. A thouſand circumſtances may happen to betray me; but I truſt much to the friendſhip and prevoyance of my friend to guard againſt detection at preſent; and, for the future, I know my Roſalie will not ſhrink from any trial of that affection which makes the happineſs of my exiſtence—even though a greater ſacrifice were required of her than to quit her preſent abode."

The anſwer that Roſalie gave to this was, that with him every place and every country would be equally pleaſant to her. He then explained to her his views.—"Unable to live without you, (ſaid he), I have never ceaſed, ſince I have been in Italy, to meditate on the means of conciliating my happineſs, and the deference I owe my mother. That friend, of whom I have juſt been ſpeaking, is now maſter of his fortune; he has offered me a ſmall, but beautiful villa in

Sicily,

Sicily, about ſeven miles from Meſſina, and not more than two and a half from the ſea. There you may live, my Roſalie, unremarked and unqueſtioned; and there I can paſs months with you, without incurring, on the part of my mother, any ſuſpicion, or any other remonſtrance, than muſt in every event ariſe from my refuſal of the match ſhe wiſhes to make for me: when, however, ſhe finds I am determined, and loſes her apprehenſions of my forming ſome attachment to an Engliſh-woman and a Proteſtant, I ſhall be left at liberty to wander about Italy occaſionally as I uſed to do; and we may be happy at the preſent with each other, without riſking the loſs of that proſperity hereafter, in which it is the firſt wiſh of my heart to place you."

This plan appeared to Roſalie not only practicable, but delightful. The unfeigned pleaſure with which ſhe embraced it ſeemed to redouble the ſatisfaction with which Montalbert expatiated on their future proſpects: he appeared, indeed, to

have thought of every thing, and ſettled what ſhould be ſaid to perſons in England, to account for her departure. It was to be given out, that Mrs. Vyvian had procured for her a ſituation in a foreign family of diſtinction, who were deſirous of having a young Engliſhwoman as inſtructreſs to their daughters; an eſtabliſhment, which, as Roſalie Leſſington was left entirely without fortune, was extremely advantageous and deſirable.—However improbable ſuch an arrangement might appear to thoſe who were acquainted with Italian cuſtoms and manners, Roſalie and Montalbert agreed, that there were none of that deſcription among thoſe who were likely to inquire of the Leſſington family; ſhe had appeared, indeed, ſo little in their ſocieties, that it was probable ſhe would ſoon be wholly forgotten.

Mrs. Boſworth and Miſs Vyvian were certainly more likely to inquire after her with more active malignity, and doubting any ſtory that was at all unlikely to form

conjectures

conjectures to her disadvantage; but, as the journey of Montalbert, at this period, was unknown to them, as they had no communication with the Lessington family, and were both too proud to annex any consequence to Rosalie, except what she had derived from their fears of their brother's or their mother's too great affection for her, it was probable that when they saw her, and heard of her no more, they would cease to think about her.

It was, however, a very inconvenient circumstance to them, that the presence of Barbara Vyvian prevented Montalbert's seeing her mother, with whom it was so necessary for him to consult. As he could not stay more than a week in England, there was not a moment to lose. Many purchases were to be made for Rosalie, as well as many precautions to be taken; and it was proper that Mrs. Vyvian and Mrs. Lessington should meet to adjust several points relative to a person in whom both were interested.

After ſome debate how to obtain admittance to Mrs. Vyvian, it was agreed that this could be done only by the means of Mr. Hayward. To him, therefore, Montalbert immediately wrote, engaging him to meet him at a tavern early the following morning; then reluctantly, and not without her repeating her remonſtrances on the impropriety of his ſtaying any longer, he took leave of Roſalie, and retired for the night to the houſe, where, in purſuance of his appointment, Mr. Hayward came to him the next day at ſix o'clock.

They together contrived ſo well, that Mrs. Leſſington was admitted to the apartment of her friend without any ſuſpicion on the part of Miſs Vyvian; and in a few days every neceſſary arrangement was made, and Roſalie ready to depart.

There were in England only two perſons, of whom to take leave for ſo long a time, perhaps for ever, gave her ſevere pain. Theſe were her real mother, for whom her affection ſeemed to be greater

than

than if ſhe had been accuſtomed always to conſider her in that endearing relationſhip, and the eldeſt Mr. Leſſington, from whom ſhe had for ſo many years received inſtruction, and towards whom ſhe had been uſed to look for future protection and regard. To him, however, ſhe could have no opportunity of ſaying farwel, as he was gone into Wales with a young man of fortune, from whom he had expectations of preferment. Roſalie dared not even write to him, as Mrs. Leſſington, for ſome reaſon or other, objected to it; ſhe was compelled, therefore, to go without bidding him adieu.

Her parting with her mother was attended with many tears on both ſides; but each wiſhed to ſhorten a painful ſcene, which it was not ſafe long to continue, as Roſalie and Montalbert were introduced into the houſe by ſtealth. This ſad farwel being over, they got into a hackney coach with their baggage, and being ſet down at an inn in Holborn, a quarter of the town where Montalbert was little likely

to be obſerved by any of his acquaintance, they there found his ſervant waiting with a poſt chaiſe according to his orders, and immediately proceeded on their way to Dover.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIX.

THE fatigue of travelling, and the ſufferings from ſea-ſickneſs, were rendered ſupportable to Roſalie by every care and attention which vigilant love could dictate. Having recovered from the latter, and wondered at the novelty which a French town preſents to one who never before croſſed the channel, the travellers proceeded, after a few days reſt, to Paris, and from thence to Lyons. Roſalie, though delighted with her journey, and acquiring new ideas at every ſtep, was impatient to proceed, becauſe ſhe dreaded nothing ſo much as that the mother of Montalbert ſhould diſcover, by his protracted ſtay, that he had been to England; while he, more ſolicitous for the health of his lovely wife,

wife, than influenced by any other motive, regulated his journey rather by her convenience, than by the neceſſity of appearing in proper time from his ſuppoſed Sicilian voyage, leaving to his friend, the Prince of ———, the care of keeping up appearances for him as well as he could.

Had not apprehenſions of what might happen to embitter his future felicity a little derogated from the enjoyment of the preſent, it would have been difficult to have found a happier being than Montalbert. While he pointed out to Roſalie the beauty of the country through which they were paſſing, every ſcene, every view, ſeemed to acquire new charms: the pleaſure which the varied proſpects of nature gave to her young and unadulterated heart, the deſire of information ſhe expreſſed, and the ſenſe and ſolidity of her remarks, communicated to him delight more exquiſite than that which he felt in contemplating the beauty of her form and face, which, he could not but obſerve, attracted univerſal

univerſal admiration wherever ſhe appeared, even in the haſte of a journey, and under the few advantages of a travelling dreſs.

In France, ſuperior or even common beauty is generally much noticed, and almoſt at every poſt town Montalbert heard ſome obſervation on the lovelineſs of *la jeune Anglais*; or, if they remained in any city more than a day, had an attempt made by ſome gay young man or other to be introduced to his notice.

From theſe ſort of acquaintance, however, Montalbert ſhrunk, with a ſenſibility unuſual on ſuch occaſions to his natural character, which was open, unſuſpicious, and ſociable. He not unfrequently was ſenſible of ſomething like jealouſy, for which he failed not to reaſon with himſelf; but ſtill his diſlike of the adulation which he ſaw likely to be offered to his wife, wherever ſhe appeared, conquered the ſenſe he had of the abſurdity of feeling ſuch a ſentiment in regard to her, who was all innocence and ſimplicity; who certainly lived but to pleaſe him,

him, and was ſo unconſcious of her perſonal attractions as not to have the leaſt idea of the reaſons which made him avoid every ſort of ſociety on the road. She imputed his ſhunning it, to the fear he had, leſt he ſhould be met by ſome of his former acquaintance, who might betray to his mother his preſent expedition.—There was, however, in this reſerve of Montalbert's leſs of perſonal jealouſy than of another ſentiment. The mind of Roſalie, unadulterated by the falſe refinements of modern education, and yet new to the world, ſeemed, to her huſband, capable of being adorned with all that lends grace to beauty, and gives perfection to genius. She had ſeen ſo little of ſociety ſince her ſhort reſidence near London, that the bloom of the mind (if ſuch an expreſſion may be allowed) had not been tarniſhed by any commerce with inferior ſociety, or the common ſtudies of a circulating library. Her natural underſtanding was excellent, and ſhe had more judgment than generally attends on ſo much

genius.

genius as ſhe poſſeſſed; but hitherto this judgment had been unexerciſed, and this genius dormant.

The little ſhe had read was but ill-calculated to form the firſt, and the ſociety ſhe had been uſually among, had allowed her little ſcope for the latter: but, at a very early period of her life ſhe became conſcious, that ſuch ſort of people as ſhe was uſually thrown among, people who only eſcape from dullneſs by flying to defamation, were extremely tireſome to her, though ſhe ſaw that nobody elſe thought ſo, and ſuſpected herſelf of being faſtidious and perverſe. The cold, and ſometimes contemptuous treatment ſhe had met with from her ſuppoſed ſiſters, the little real affection ſhe had ever found from the perſons whom ſhe believed to be her parents, had rendered her timid and diffident.—As nobody but Mrs. Vyvian ſeemed to love her, ſhe ſuppoſed that to none but Mrs. Vyvian ſhe ſeemed worthy of affection. Since the explanation that had been given all the paſſages of her

her former life appeared in a new light, and ſhe accounted for the indifference of her ſuppoſed, and the tenderneſs of her real, parent.

This extraordinary diſcovery was a frequent topic of converſation between her and Montalbert as they purſued on their journey; and they often canvaſſed the circumſtances that would, if the narrative of Mrs. Vyvian had been leſs authenticated, have given riſe to incredulity.—Montalbert, when he firſt heard it from Roſalie, had remarked theſe circumſtances—"It is ſtrange (ſaid he) that the account you have of your father's preſent ſituation is ſo vague, ſo indiſtinct, that you have no clue to guide you even to the certainty of his exiſtence, none by which you can identify yourſelf to him. I can make every allowance for the ſingular circumſtances in which Mrs. Vyvian was placed; for the timidity of her temper, and for the violence of my grandfather, whom I have always heard repreſented as a tyrant, who was not to be, would not be,

be, contradicted. Still it appears equally unfortunate and ſtrange, that ſhe omitted to tell you whether he knew of your birth? whether the family of Ormſby were appriſed of it?"

In anſwer to theſe remarks, the juſtice of which ſhe however acknowledged, Roſalie bade him recollect, how much of all the circumſtances moſt intereſting to her might be unknown, even to Mrs. Vyvian herſelf.

"When I remember (ſaid ſhe) the countenance and manner of my mother, when ſhe recalled thoſe ſcenes in which ſhe ſuffered ſo cruelly; when I think how little capable ſhe was, even at this diſtance of time, of dwelling on thoſe parts of her ſtory, where ſhe had occaſion to name my unfortunate father, and the awe ſhe had of her own, as well as the tyranny ſhe has ſince experienced from Mr. Vyvian, and the neceſſity there has ever been for ſecrecy as to a part of her former life, which would undoubtedly have aggravated her actual

tual ſorrows, I cannot wonder, though, perhaps, I may have occaſion to lament, the incomplete information this dear unhappy parent has given me..... I have ſeen her lips tremble, and cold and death-like dew on her temples, while, in a languid voice, ſhe was relating what I have repeated to you; and I know that no motives leſs powerful than her love and her fears for me could have engaged her to write as ſhe did to you. Long years of ſorrow have ſo broken her ſpirits, that the moſt gloomy ideas ſometimes take poſſeſſion of her mind; ſhe trembles, leſt incidents in her life, for which ſurely ſhe has already been puniſhed ſufficiently, ſhould ſtill draw the anger of Heaven on her children, as well as hazard her future happineſs. She thinks, that ſhe ſhould not have deceived Mr. Vyvian; though, had ſhe not done ſo, there is no imagining what might have been the conſequence from the furious temper of her father; and the conſciouſneſs of having done ſo

has

has made her patiently ſubmit to very unworthy treatment—offering (to uſe her own pathetic phraſe) her ſufferings as a ſacrifice to the God whom ſhe had offended, and hoping their bitterneſs and duration might expiate the errors of her early life.—From hence I account for many parts of my mother's conduct, (continued Roſalie), that before appeared myſterious. Her ſevere penances; her voluntary reſignation of the world, and her patient ſubmiſſion to the undutiful and even cruel conduct of her daughters; and from the pains theſe ladies took to alarm her about their brother's attachment to me, though ignorant of all the agonies they were inflicting, I have an explanation of that forced and involuntary neglect of me, which rendered me ſo very wretched for ſome time, and of which I am perſuaded nothing but this cruel idea could have induced her to aſſume even the appearance."

Montalbert liſtened ſilently to this natural and ſenſible vindication of conduct, which

which appeared to him more extraordinary and leſs accountable than it did to Roſalie. He thought it, indeed, almoſt impoſſible that Mr. Vyvian ſhould be ſo ignorant of his wife's former attachment as he ſeemed to be; and he was ſure that her father had known, if not all, yet ſo much of the truth, as had induced him to act in concert with Ormſby's family, or at leaſt to compel them ſo to act with him as to have ſaved his daughter's honour at the expence of her happineſs.

The converſation on this ſubject was frequently renewed during the progreſs of their journey, and the tears of Roſalie as often flowed from the recollection of the ſad ſtate of ſpirits and health in which ſhe had left her mother. So great were Mrs. Vyvian's apprehenſions of accident, that might diſcover the ſecret ſo long cheriſhed like a ſerpent in her boſom, that ſhe had deſired Roſalie and Montalbert not to write to her on the way, thus depriving herſelf of what ſhe owned would be one great alleviation of the reſtraint

and

and miſery under which ſhe was condemned to repine. The moments of reflection, therefore, on the uneaſy hours of this beloved parent, were the only moments that paſſed without pleaſure, amounting ſometimes to rapture, when, as they approached the Alps, the moſt ſublime and magnificent views of nature were opened to her aſtoniſhed view.

Accuſtomed of late to the flat, monotonous, and unintereſting views round London, ſhe had frequently ſighed for the more animating landſcapes of her native country, and had no ideas of beauty ſuperior to that which is formed by thoſe green and undulating hills, in ſome places fringed half-way up by beech woods, in others rearing their turfy mounds, covered with ſheep on one ſide above the once impenetrable foreſts of the weald, on the other gradually declining towards the apparently boundleſs ocean that forms the Engliſh channel.

But when ſhe ſaw the rich and luxurious country, which nature, " with all her great works

works about her," ſpreads before the aſtoniſhed traveller, between Lyons and Civita Vechia, the port from whence Montalbert determined to embark for Sicily, in order to avoid both Rome and Naples, her mind was exalted by ſcenes ſo much ſuperior to any ſhe had ever formed an idea of either from the efforts of the pen or the pencil, ſhe ſeemed tranſported to a world of higher rank in the univerſe than that ſhe had inhabited while ſhe was in England; and ſhe was of an age and diſpoſition to forget, or at leaſt be indifferent to thoſe circumſtances which can hardly fail to remind Engliſh travellers, that, though other countries may have more bold and attractive ſcenery, their own is that where life is enjoyed with the greateſt comfort.

Arrived at Civita Vechia, after an abſence of ten weeks, from England, Montalbert felt ſome degree of uneaſineſs when he knew he muſt hear from his friend, the Count d'Alozzi, what had paſſed during his abſence. From this he was relieved by

by finding a ſervant of the Count's waiting for him with a ſmall veſſel hired to convey him and Roſalie to Meſſina, where the Count waited his arrival, that, after Roſalie was fixed at the habitation he had prepared for her, they might return together to Naples.

Montalbert, who now ſaw himſelf freed from the painful ſolicitudes that had ſo long perplexed him, would not, however, liſten to Roſalie's entreaties to embark immediately; but, fearful of expoſing her too ſoon to ſea-ſickneſs after the fatigue of ſo long a journey by land, he remained a few days at the port, while Roſalie, who had no terror ſo great as that of meeting the mother of Montalbert, and no idea how far ſhe was from her, concealed herſelf at the inn where ſhe lodged, and could not, without alarm, ſuffer Montalbert to quit her for a moment.

Montalbert, however, knew that this was not a place where it was likely he ſhould be known, remained with great

tranquillity for three days. All ſeemed to favour their voyage, which he conſidered, not without ſome pain, muſt be twice as long as if he had ſailed from the Bay of Naples. The weather, however, was mild, and the wind favourable; and a voyage begun thus propitiouſly was as happily concluded, though not till they had been eight days at ſea. On the evening of the laſt, they entered, by as bright a moon that ever enlightened the ſwelling waves of the Mediterranean, the port of Meſſina. Never did the magnificent ſpectacle it afforded give more delight than Roſalie felt, as, ſitting upon deck, Montalbert pointed out to her the beauty of the ſcene: the inconveniencies and tedioufneſs of the voyage were no longer remembered. As the veſſel ſlowly approached the ſhore, every object, in the beautiful bay, was diſtinctly viſible; the bright light of the moon fell on the long line of magnificent buildings that overlook the ————, above which roſe the mountains, whoſe outline was boldly marked

ed in the deep blue æther, while Etna, no otherwiſe diſtinguiſhed than by its towering grandeur, roſe ſublimely above the reſt. The ſea, calm as the Eſculean above it, ſcarce broke in trembling lines as it approached the ſhore, but ſeemed to be with all nature in deep repoſe. At the diſtance of two or three miles were ſeen floating lights of the fiſhermen employed in taking the *piſca ſpada*, or ſword-fiſh, which gave to the gently undulating tide the appearance of being enchanted, and of bearing fairy lights on its boſom.

Arrived at the lodgings provided for him by the active friendſhip of his friend, the Count d'Alozzi, Montalbert ſaw his beloved Roſalie in ſafety, and all his cares were for the preſent ſuſpended; but this could not, he knew, laſt long. He had many acquaintances at Meſſina, and many people were there occaſionally who knew his mother; it would, therefore, be unſafe for him to appear publicly with his wife, and, after one day of repoſe at his lodgings, they removed in a carriage, with

which they were accommodated by the Count, to the villa he had lent them, at the diſtance of hardly three miles from Meſſina, where they found every thing that could contribute to their convenience; and were, in a few days, as much ſettled as if they had already inhabited this enchanted ſpot for for many years.

CHAP.

CHAP. XX.

WHILE Montalbert felt himſelf highly gratified and obliged by the care his friend had taken to provide every thing in their new abode that could render it convenient and agreeable to Roſalie, ſhe was never weary with contemplating the beauty of the ſcenery around her. A garden, which even the falſe Italian taſte could not ſpoil, aroſe behind the houſe, and its orange trees fringed the foot of a hill, which would in England have been called a mountain. Even the verdure of England was in ſome meaſure enjoyed here amid the glowing ſuns of Italy; for the higher lands are refreſhed by dews, which prevent their being parched like the plains. Beyond the encloſure,

ſhrubs, which are carefully cultivated in England, grew ſpontaneouſly, and formed a natural wilderneſs of the gayeſt colours and lighteſt foliage. From hence the moſt glorious view preſented itſelf that imagination could picture: the ſea, and the oppoſite coaſt of Calabria; the Lipari iſlands; Strombolo, marked by a black wreath of curling ſmoke ſtaining the mild and clear ſky; innumerable veſſels ſcattered about the blue expanſe of water; and the faro of Meſſina giving to the whole a new and ſingular feature, connecting the varieties of an extenſive ſea view with a port, ſeemed almoſt to unite the iſland to the oppoſite continent.

Diveſted of every care that related to the paſt, ſave only her ſolicitude for Mrs. Vyvian, Roſalie would have fancied herſelf in Paradiſe, had not Montalbert been reminded by the Count of the neceſſity of their immediately departing together for Naples.

This zealous friend had forborne to viſit them till ſome days after their being ſettled

ſettled in their new habitation. He appeared to feel for Roſalie all that reſpectful admiration which beauty and ſweetneſs, like hers, naturally inſpired. Her manner of ſpeaking Italian was particularly intereſting to the Count, who ſeemed to be delighted to inſtruct her: he lamented to her the cruel but neceſſary repreſentations that he thought himſelf obliged to make to Montalbert, that he muſt either determine to go back to Naples, or give up the plan of concealment which had already coſt him ſo much trouble. Roſalie, in her ingenuous and intereſting manner, confeſſed their obligations to him, but ſighed, and with difficulty reſtrained from tears; while acknowledging the truth of his obſervation, ſhe trembled at the neceſſity of yielding to them.

Montalbert, with whom reaſon and love were at variance with each other, became every day more gloomy, penſive, and uneaſy. Sometimes he determined to hazard every thing rather than leave her. "After

all, (ſaid he, as he entered into theſe arguments with himſelf)—after all, what is it that I am contending for?—for what is it that I am ſacrificing thoſe hours that will return no more?—for money which I may never enjoy—for high proſperity which is not, that I know of, conducive to real happineſs. Is it not true, that a day, an hour, at this ſeaſon of my life, is worth half an age towards its cloſe?—Yet I am throwing away theſe precious hours of youth and health, in hopes of being a very rich man hereafter."

Theſe arguments, however, whatever might be their ſolidity, if tried by the maxims of Epicurean Philoſophy, ſometimes yielded to other conſiderations.—He was not devoid of ambition; nor could he wholly diveſt himſelf of that ſort of attachment towards his mother, which, though it had more of fear than of love in it, had become a ſort of principle from habit.

His frequent fits of ſilence, his melancholy looks, and long ſolitary walks by the

the ſea ſide, the evident irreſolution and deep depreſſion he laboured under, gave to Roſalie the moſt poignant uneaſineſs. She ſometimes was afraid of increaſing theſe ſymptoms of a mind, ill at eaſe by appearing to notice them; at other times ſhe ventured gently to remonſtrate with him. At length, after a conference of ſome hours with Alozzi, he ſuddenly took a reſolution to depart the next day; Alozzi was returning to Naples, and they were to embark together.

This reſolution he ſeemed to have adopted in conſequence of having reflected, that, if he did not ſoon go, he might not return time enough for the hour ſo dreaded, yet ſo deſired, when Roſalie might give birth to another being only leſs dear to him than herſelf. This was to be expected now within two months. To be abſent at ſuch a time was infinitely more formidable to his imagination than leaving her now; and, as if this had never occurred to him before, he now reſolutely determined to tear himſelf away.

Roſalie ſaw him depart with anguiſh of heart, which ſhe endeavoured to ſtifle, that what he felt might not be increaſed; but when Alozzi had carried him off, almoſt by force, ſo dreadful did it ſeem to him to ſay adieu!—ſhe was ſo much affected, that ſhe could not remain at the window till they were out of ſight; but, ſhutting herſelf in her own apartment, ſhe gave herſelf up to tears.

The remonſtrances, however, of her Italian woman, who was already much attached to her, and the care which under ſuch circumſtances ſhe owed to her own health, even for his ſake, whoſe abſence ſhe lamented, rouſed her at length from this indulgence of uſeleſs regret. She now ſought to amuſe her mind by contemplating anew the ſcenes around her; but their charms were in a great meaſure loſt. Montalbert was no longer with her to point out the beauties that every where ſurrounded their abode, or to enjoy them with her. There was an aweful ſublimity in the great outline of Etna; its deep foreſts, and magnificent

magnificent features, which afforded a kind of melancholy pleaſure. Not in a ſituation to explore the ſcenes it offered more minutely, yet feeling infinite curioſity, ſhe endeavoured to amuſe her mind with the proſpect of future days, Montalbert would return to her; ſhe ſhould be bleſſed in beholding his tenderneſs for his child; ſhe ſhould again liſten to his animated deſcription of a country replete with wonders, or be able, perhaps, to viſit it with him. In the mean time ſhe determined to paſs the heavy, heavy hours in cultivating the talents he loved. She took up her pencils, and, ſtrolling into the garden, placed herſelf on the ſeat where, as they often ſat together, he had pointed out to her ſome points of view which were particularly favourable to the painter; ſhe would have ſketched them, but her efforts were faint and uncertain. In ſpite of all her exertions, dark preſentiments of future evil hung upon her ſpirits. Their depreſſion

ſhe imputed to her perſonal ſufferings; the period, to which it was ſo natural for her to look forward with dread, was now near. She had heard, indeed, that in the climate of Sicily infinitely leſs was to be apprehended than in England; but this ſhe only knew from the report of perſons who might ſay it to appeaſe her fears and reaſſure her ſpirits. Perhaps it was her deſtiny to be ſnatched from Montalbert, to releaſe him from his embarraſſment, and to make room for the Roman lady, to whom his mother was ſo deſirous of uniting him.—While theſe thoughts paſſed through her mind, in gloomy ſucceſſion, ſhe repeated, from the little, ſimple ballad of Gay——

"Thou'lt meet an happier maiden,
"But none that loves thee ſo!"

At length, however ſlowly, the tedious hours wore away. Montalbert returned; he returned apparently more enamoured than

than before this abſence of nine weeks, and Roſalie forgot that ſhe had ever been unhappy.

When, the firſt joy of their meeting being a little ſubdued, Roſalie ſpoke to her huſband of his mother, ſhe fancied that though he declined converſation on the ſubject, that he was in reality leſs anxious about the future conſequences of his marriage than ſhe had ever yet ſeen him. When he could not wholly evade ſpeaking on the ſubject, he affected an indifference, which made Roſalie believe he was himſelf at eaſe; for, little ſkilled herſelf in diſſimulation, ſhe did not for a moment imagine that this tranquillity was artificial.

At length the hour arrived when real joy ſucceeded to this external calm. Roſalie brought into the world a lovely boy, and her own health was ſo ſoon re-eſtabliſhed, that, in a very few weeks, her beauty appeared more brilliant than before her confinement. More attached to her than ever, Montalbert could hardly bear

bear to have her a moment out of his ſight; yet the time was come, when, if he followed the dictates of that prudence to which he had already made ſo many ſacrifices, he muſt return to Naples.

Alozzi, whoſe friendſhip for him appeared to be undiminiſhed, failed not to remind Montalbert of the neceſſity of this return; but his remonſtrances, however reaſonable and gentle, were always received with uneaſineſs, and ſometimes with impatience and ill-humour. The viſits of Alozzi had not been more frequent than formerly; on the contrary, he had been more rarely their viſitor than during his former ſtay at Meſſina; though he returned thither before Montalbert, he never appeared at the reſidence of Roſalie till his friend arrived there. Notwithſtanding theſe precautions, however, the fault of Montalbert's temper found food to nouriſh itſelf in the looks of Alozzi, whom he fancied regarded Roſalie with too much admiration, and ſometimes fixed on her eyes in which paſſion and hope

were

were too evidently expreſſed. This idea having once ſeized the imagination of Montalbert, became a ſource of inexpreſſible torment, and when he reflected, that he muſt ſoon leave his wife in the houſe of this friend, who was, he perſuaded himſelf, in love with her, neither her virtues, nor her attachment to him, neither the honour of his friend, nor the confidence he ought to have had in Roſalie, were ſufficient to quiet his apprehenſions, though he felt them to be alike injurious to his own peace, and to that of thoſe whom he moſt loved.

Sometimes he gazed on Roſalie as ſhe ſat with his boy ſleeping in her arms, and tried to perſuade himſelf, that if once his mother could ſee theſe intereſting creatures, ſhe would not only pardon him, but receive them to her protection and tenderneſs. Then, recollecting what had paſſed during his laſt viſit to this violent and impracticable parent, he felt that all ſuch hopes were deluſive: he became aſhamed of what often appeared to him

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an unpardonable meanneſs, and reſolved, at whatever pecuniary riſk, to throw off a yoke which degraded him in his own eyes; to produce his wife and his child, and abide the conſequences of his mother's diſpleaſure.

While Montalbert was thus deliberating, and every hour forming and abandoning projects for the future, a letter he received from Naples, compelled him to adopt the meaſure of immediately going thither. It was from a female relation, who uſually reſided with his mother; and who now informed him, that ſhe was extremely ill, and it was abſolutely neceſſary for him to ſee her as immediately as poſſible.

Wretched is the policy which too often puts at variance the beſt feelings of human nature; which ſets the parent againſt the child, becauſe expences either affect his eaſe, or are painful to his avarice; which eſtrange the brother from the ſiſter, and make enemies of the amiable and lovely group, who, but a few, a very few years before, were happy aſſociates in the innocent,

nocent, thoughtleſs hours of childhood.—Ah! wretched is the policy which makes the ſon, too, often rejoice, when ſhe who bore him and nouriſhed him mingles with the duſt; when thoſe eyes are cloſed which have ſo often been filled with tears of tender anxiety as they gazed on him!—and yet all the contrivances, which cunning and caution have invented for the ſecurity of property, have a direct tendency to occaſion all this, while miſtaken views of happineſs, unfortunate miſtakes in the head, or deficiency of feeling in the heart, do the reſt, and occaſion more than half the miſeries of life.

Montalbert, on receiving the letter that gave him notice of his mother's danger, felt, for a moment, that he was her ſon; but almoſt as ſoon this ſenſe of filial duty and affection was loſt in an involuntary recollection of the releaſe which her death would give him from the pain of concealing a clandeſtine marriage, or reducing himſelf and his poſterity to indigence if he betrayed it.

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He had no ſooner felt this ſentiment ariſe in his mind than he was ſhocked at and reſiſted it; but again it aroſe, and he found all his affection for his mother weak, when oppoſed to the idea of the advantages he might derive from her quitting the world where ſhe alone was the barrier between him and happineſs with the woman he adored.

It was not, however, a time to inveſtigate theſe ſentiments deeply, but to act in purſuance of the letter. He haſtened, therefore, to inform his wife of its contents, who agreed with him entirely as to the urgency of his immediate departure, yet wept and hung about him as if impreſſed with ſome unuſual apprehenſion of future ſorrow; and, as ſhe kiſſed her child, ſhe almoſt drowned it with her tears.

Montalbert, who felt none of this violent grief at an abſence, the duration of which would, as he thought, depend on himſelf, conſoled her with views of future proſperity and uninterrupted happineſs.

Alozzi

Alozzi had a few days before left Meſſina, and was gone to Agrigentum, where he intended to remain ſome time. Montalbert, therefore, who had no doubt but that he ſhould return within five or ſix weeks, felt no uneaſineſs at the thoughts of leaving to frequent interviews with his wife, in his abſence, a man whom all his reaſon did not enable him to ſee with her, in his preſence, without pain.

The letter Montalbert had received was written in ſuch preſſing terms, that there was no time to be loſt, and he determined to begin his journey on the next day.

Roſalie, far from feeling even the uſual tranquillity, ſaw the moment of his bidding her adieu arrive with agonies of ſorrow, for which ſhe knew not how to account—yet could not ſtifle or command. Nothing new had occurred in her ſituation to make this abſence more dreadful than the two preceding ones; indeed it ſhould have been otherwiſe, for the preſence

ſence of her infant, on which ſhe doated with all the fondneſs of a firſt maternal affection, was what was moſt likely to conſole her in this temporary parting from its father: nor had ſhe to ſay, with the unhappy Dido——

" Si quis mihi parvulus aula
" Luderet Æneas, qui te tantem ore referret;
" Non equidam omnino capta aut deſerta viderer."

VIRGIL'S ÆNEID.

The ſervants about her were the ſame as thoſe with whom ſhe had formerly reaſon to be ſatisfied. The ſituation around her offered all that the moſt lovely ſcenes of nature could do to aſſuage the pain inflicted by her huſband's involuntary and ſhort abſence. All this ſhe urged to appeaſe the tumult of her ſpirits; ſhe owned the juſtice of it all, but nothing gave her any conſolation, and, when ſhe at laſt allowed him to tear himſelf away, the reſolution to ſee him depart was acquired by an

an effort ſo painful, that he was hardly out of ſight before her ſenſes forſook her, and it was many hours before the remonſtrances of Zulietta, her Italian maid, and of an older woman who aſſiſted in the care of her infant boy, ſo far rouſed her from the deſpondence into which ſhe fell, as to engage her to attend to the care of her own health, on which depended that of the child ſhe nouriſhed at her breaſt.

By degrees, however, ſhe became more compoſed; ſhe received cheerful letters from Montalbert, ſent by a veſſel which paſſed them at ſea. It mentioned, that they were becalmed, but that he was perfectly well, and had no doubt of writing to her the next day from Naples. Aſhamed of fears and of deſpondence, which ſeemed, as ſoon as ſhe could reaſon upon it, to have ſo little foundation, ſhe returned once more to the amuſements which uſed to beguile the hours of her huſband's abſence, and all that were not dedicated to the care

of

of her child, whom ſhe attended to herſelf, ſhe paſſed in cultivating thoſe talents which Montalbert loved, and in which he had aſſiſted and marked her progreſs with ſuch exquiſite delight.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXI.

IN Sicily there is no winter ſuch as is felt in more northern countries, and now, in the month of February; ſpring every where appeared in the rich vales that ſtretch towards the ſea from the baſe of Etna. His towering and majeſtic ſummit alone preſented the image of eternal froſt, and formed a ſingular but magnificent contraſt to the vivid and luxuriant vegetation of the lower world.

Having only Italian or Sicilian ſervants about her, her former knowledge of the language was ſo much improved, that Roſalie now ſpoke Italian with eaſe, and read it with as much pleaſure as Engliſh; but, ſince Montalbert had been gone this time, ſhe felt the want of new Engliſh books; ſhe read over the few ſhe had with

with her, repeated frequently ſome pieces of poetry ſhe was fond of, and ſometimes longing to hear the ſound of an Engliſh voice, and fancying, that if Montalbert's abſence was lengthened, ſhe ſhould forget her native tongue, or pronounce it like a foreigner. From this train of thought her mind was naturally carried to England, and when ſhe reflected how entirely ſhe was ſecluded from all knowledge of what paſſed there, ſhe felt her tenderneſs and ſolicitude return for Mrs. Vyvian, and would have given half a world, had ſhe poſſeſſed it, to have known how that beloved parent bore her abſence, and what was the ſtate of her health. Even the paſſionate fondneſs ſhe felt for her child moſt forcibly recalled that affection which ſhe owed her mother.... " Juſt ſo, (ſaid ſhe, as ſhe ſtudied with delight, in the feàtures of her little boy, the reſemblance of Montalbert), juſt ſo, perhaps, my poor mother, as ſoon as ſhe dared indulge herſelf with a ſight of me, endeavoured to make out, in my unfortunate lineaments, the

the likeneſs of my unhappy father—that unfortunate Ormſby, whoſe uncertain fate has thrown over her days the heavy gloom of anxious deſpondence, more difficult, perhaps, to bear than deſpair itſelf.... Dear, unhappy parents!—never ſhall your daughter ſee either of you perhaps again—never ſhall ſhe know the bleſſing of being acknowledged by a father; of being preſſed to the conſcious heart of a mother proud to own her!"

A flood of tears followed this ſoliloquy; but ſhe remembered for how many miſfortunes ſuch a huſband as Montalbert ought to conſole her, and tried, though in vain, to call in a train of more cheerful ideas. The gloom, however, which hung over her mind, and for which ſhe could not herſelf account, was neither to be reaſoned with, nor diſſipated entirely; and having neither books nor converſation to beguile the time, her ſpirits became more and more depreſſed. A thouſand vague apprehenſions beſet her for the health of

her child; ſhe now never quitted him a moment, and watched him inceſſantly with a vigilance which fed itſelf with imaginary terrors.

This ſtate of mind had continued ſome time, with no other relief than what the hope of Montalbert's ſpeedy return afforded, when, ſitting in a lower apartment with her infant in her arms, Roſalie was ſurpriſed by a ſingular motion in the floor, which ſeemed to riſe under her feet; ſhe ſtarted up, and ſaw, with horror and amazement, the walls of the room breaking in ſeveral directions, while the duſt and lime threatened to choke her, and ſo obſcured the air, that ſhe could hardly diſtinguiſh Zulietta, who ran from another room, and ſeizing her by the hand, drew her with all the ſtrength ſhe could exert through a door which opened under an arch into the garden. Zulietta ſpoke not; ſhe was, indeed, unable to ſpeak.

Roſalie, to whom the tremendous idea of an earthquake now occurred, followed

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as quickly as ſhe was able, claſping her boy to her breaſt*. They were ſoon about fifty yards from the houſe, the ground heaving and rolling beneath them like the waves of the ſea, and beyond them breaking into yawning gulphs, which threatened to prevent their flight; Roſalie then looked round, and ſaw, inſtead of the houſe ſhe had juſt left, a cloud of impenetrable ſmoke, which prevented her knowing whether any of it remained above the convulſed earth that had entirely ſwallowed part of the ſhattered walls. No language could deſcribe the terror and confuſion that overwhelmed this little group of fugitives; for no other fearful ſpectacle can impreſs on the human mind ideas of ſuch complicated horrors as now

* When the ruins came to be cleared away, ſays Sir William Hamilton, the bodies of the men who had periſhed were univerſally found in the attitude of reſiſtance; the women in that of prayer, unleſs it was thoſe who had children with them, in which caſe they were obſerved to have taken ſuch poſtures as were likely to ſhelter and protect them.

ſurrounded them. They heard the craſh of the building they had juſt left, as it half ſunk into a deep chaſm; before them, and even under their feet, the ground continued to break; the trees were torn from their roots, and falling in every direction around them; and vapours of ſulphur and burning bitumen ſeemed to riſe in peſtilential clouds, which impeded the ſight and the reſpiration.

Roſalie called faintly, and with a ſickening heart, as conſcious of its inutility, on the name of Montalbert. Alas! Montalbert was afar off, and could not ſuccour her. To the mercy of Heaven, who ſeemed thus to ſummon her and her infant away, ſhe committed him and herſelf; and laying herſelf on the ground, with her child in her arms, and Zulietta kneeling by her, ſhe reſigned herſelf to that fate which appeared to be inevitable.

Flight was vain—all human help was vain, but nature ſtill reſiſted diſſolution, and ſhe could not help thinking with agony of the ſtate of Montalbert's mind, when

when the loſs of his wife and child ſhould be known to him. Another thought darted into her mind, and brought with it a more ſevere pang than any ſhe had yet felt: Montalbert propoſed about this time to return; within a few days ſhe had began to expect him, in conſequence of his laſt letters. It was poſſible—alas! it was even probable, that he was already at Meſſina, and he too might have periſhed: he might at this moment expire amid the ſuffocating ruins—cruſhed by their weight, or ſtifled by ſubterraneous fires. The image was too horrible; ſhe ſtarted up, as if it were poſſible for her feeble arms to ſave him; ſhe looked wildly round her—all was ruin and deſolation, but the earth no longer trembled as it had done, and a faint hope of ſafety aroſe almoſt inſenſibly in her heart. She ſpoke to Zulietta, who ſeemed petrified and motionleſs; ſhe conjured her to riſe and aſſiſt her—yet whither to go ſhe knew not, nor what were her intentions, or her proſpects of ſafety.

While Roſalie yet ſpoke incoherently, almoſt unconſcious that ſhe ſpoke at all, a ſecond ſhock, though leſs violent than the firſt, again deprived her of the little preſence of mind ſhe had collected—and, again proſtrate on the ground, ſhe commended her ſoul to Heaven!

In a few moments, however, this new convulſion ceaſed, and the poſſibility that Montalbert might be returning, might be ſeeking her in diſtracted apprehenſion, reſtored to her the power of exertion. The hope that ſhe might once ſee her huſband, ſerved as a perſuaſion that ſhe ſhould ſee, and ſhe advanced heedleſs of any danger ſhe might incur by it towards the ruins of the houſe, where it was probable he would ſeek for her; but between her and thoſe ruins was a deep and impaſſable chaſm, which had been formed during the laſt ſhock.

Zulietta, from her abrupt and wild manner, had conceived an idea that her miſtreſs meant, in the deſpair occaſioned by terror and grief, to throw herſelf into this

this gulph. Impreſſed with this fear, ſhe ſeized her by the arm, and making uſe of ſuch arguments as the moment allowed, ſhe drew her away, and they walked together, as haſtily as they had ſtrength, through the garden and up a riſing ground beyond it, which was terminated by a deep wood, which had been leſs affected than the lower ground, though one or two of the trees were fallen and ſome half uprooted. Unable to go farther, Roſalie ſat down on one of their trunks, and Zulietta placed herſelf near her.

Evening was coming on, but the deep gloom that hung over every object made the time of day imperceptible. Almoſt doubting of her exiſtence, Roſalie ſeemed inſenſible to every thing till the feeble cry of her infant boy, miſſing its accuſtomed nouriſhment at her breaſt, awakened the terrible apprehenſion of ſeeing him periſh before her eyes for want of that nouriſhment.

" Zulietta, (ſaid ſhe, in a mournful and broken voice)—Zulietta! what will be-

come of my child?"—"Ah! what will become of us all?—(anſwered the half-ſenſeleſs girl).—O Dio! we ſhall die here, or we ſhall be murdered by the men who frequent theſe woods."

"Could I but ſave my child! (exclaimed Roſalie, little encouraged by her companion).——Could I but know whether Montalbert lives!—O Montalbert! where are you—if you exiſt?"-----

A ſhriek from Zulietta interrupted this ſoliloquy. She ſtarted from the tree where they ſat, and fled to ſome diſtance; Roſalie involuntarily followed her, looking back towards the dark wood. "I ſaw ſome perſon move among the trees, (cried Zulietta, in anſwer to her lady's eager inquiries), I am ſure I did—banditti are coming to murder us."

"And were that all I had to dread, (ſaid Roſalie, collecting ſome portion of reſolution)—were that all I had to dread, how gladly would I give up my life and that of this infant. But recollect yourſelf, Zulietta; who ſhould at this time purſue us?—

us?—I have heard---------- (ſhe pauſed, for her memory was confuſed and diſtracted)—I have heard, that it is among the ruins of houſes that, at ſuch times as this, the robber and the aſſaſſin throw themſelves.....Oh! would we could find any nouriſhment; but where to look for it—I cannot ſee my baby die, Zulietta—ah! what are any fears I may have for myſelf, compared to thoſe I feel for him!—In the woods, perhaps, we might find ſome fallen fruits."—Zulietta was not a mother, and the apprehenſions of theſe banditti had taken ſuch ſtrong poſſeſſion of her ſtartled and diſſipated ſenſes, that every noiſe ſhe either heard or fancied, ſhe imagined to be their ſteps among the woods; and the reddening light of the declining day, as it faintly glimmered among the trees, was ſuppoſed to be their fires at a diſtance in the foreſt.

Had Roſalie, however, been accompanied by a perſon who had more fortitude, there would have been leſs occaſion for

her to exert that reſolution which her ſuperior good ſenſe gave her, and which was now abſolutely neceſſary for the preſervation of them all. A moment's ſteady reflection lent her courage to attempt at leaſt appeaſing the groundleſs fears of Zulietta—enough of real apprehenſion, alas! remained.

It was not, however, without great difficulty, that ſhe could prevail on her ſervant to follow her, not into the wood, for that ſhe peremptorily refuſed, but round one of its extremities to a ſmall eminence which Roſalie thought muſt command a view of Meſſina; at leaſt it was not far from this ſpot, as ſhe now remembered, that ſhe had once been ſhewn a proſpect of the town by Montalbert. They exerted all their ſtrength, and ſlowly gained a ſtill higher ground, which commanded an extenſive view of the city, the ſurrounding country, and the ſea. The country remained, but not at all reſembling what it had been only a few hours before;

before; the ſea too was viſible, though heavy and dark clouds hung over it, and it ſeemed mingled with the threatening atmoſphere above it; but Meſſina was diſtinguiſhed only by more diſmal vapours, and by the red gleam of fires that were conſuming the fallen buildings.—Roſalie liſtened if, from among the deſolate ruins, ſhe could hear the wailings of the ruined!—but ſilence and death ſeemed to have enwrapt this miſerable ſcene in their blackeſt veil, and ſuch an image of horror preſented itſelf to her mind, as that which ſince inſpired the ſublime and fearful deſcription of the deſtruction of the army of Cambyſes in the deſert, ending thus———

"Then ceas'd the ſtorm.—Night bow'd his Ethiop brow
"To earth, and liſten'd to the groans below
"Grim horror ſhook:—a while the living hill
"Heav'd with convulſive throws—and all was ſtill."

DR. DARWIN'S ŒCONOMY OF VEGETATION.

Maternal love, the ſtrongeſt paſſion that the female heart can feel, ſtill ſuſtained the timid and delicate Roſalie amidſt the real miſeries of which ſhe was herſelf conſcious, and thoſe which the diſturbed and agitated ſpirits of Zulietta repreſented.—She muſt ſtruggle to ſuſtain herſelf, or what would become of her child? Could ſhe not bear any immediate evils better than the dreadful idea of leaving this lovely, helpleſs creature to the mercy of the elements?—Tears, hitherto denied to her, filled her eyes as ſhe carried her mind forward to all the poſſibilities to which this fearful image led her; ſhe found relief in weeping, and once more acquired voice and courage to aſk Zulietta what it would be beſt for them to do?—Some time paſſed before Zulietta was capable of giving a rational anſwer; at length, however, they agreed, that it would be better, before it became entirely dark, to endeavour to find ſome houſe where they might be received for the night—

night—" for ſurely (ſaid Roſalie) ſome muſt remain, wide as the deſolation has been."

In this hope, Roſalie and her attendant moved on as well as their ſtrength permitted them; but it was by this time nearly dark, and round the ſkirts of the wood it became very difficult for them to diſcern their way.

Languid and deſponding, Zulietta ſometimes declared ſhe could go no farther, and the ſpirits of her unhappy miſtreſs were exhauſted in vain to reanimate her courage.

A path, which they thought might lead to ſome habitation, had inſenſibly bewildered them among the trees, and the darkneſs, which now totally ſurrounded them, again raiſed new terrors in the mind of Zulietta, who, clinging to Roſalie, inſiſted upon it that ſhe heard the footſteps of perſons following them: they liſtened—a dreary ſilence enſued; but preſently Roſalie was convinced that at leaſt this time the fears of her woman were but too well

well grounded; the voices of two men talking together were diſtinctly heard, and, on turning round, they ſaw a light glimmer among the trees. As theſe perſons, whoever they were, followed the path they had taken, and were advancing quickly towards them, eſcape or concealment became impoſſible; half dead with fear, and almoſt unconſcious of what ſhe did, Roſalie now ſtopped, determined to await the event.

The men approached, and, as ſoon as the light they held made the figures before them viſible, one of them uttered an exclamation of ſurprize, and eagerly advanced towards Roſalie—it was Count Alozzi, who, with one of his ſervants, had come in ſearch of her. Without, however, ſtaying to tell her what circumſtances had brought him thus from Agrigentum, or how he knew that ſhe had eſcaped with her child from the deſtruction that had overwhelmed the houſe, he entreated her to ſuffer him to conduct

her

her to a place of ſecurity, which he hoped, he ſaid, to find not far off.

The dread of periſhing with her child in the woods being thus ſuddenly removed from her mind, hope and gratitude as rapidly ſucceeded.—Ah! what ſo comfortable to the weary wanderer, even in the common paths of life, as the ſoothing voice of a friend!—and ſuch Alozzi now appeared to Roſalie. As ſhe ſuffered him to lead her on, his ſervant preceding them with the light, ſhe eagerly queſtioned him, if he knew any thing of Montalbert?—Whether it was poſſible that he might be arrived at Meſſina?—and then, trying to perſuade herſelf he was ſafe, ſhe went on to compare the probabilities there were that he had not ſuffered, but was either at Naples, or at ſea on his paſſage. Theſe inquiries Alozzi anſwered with great coldneſs: he told her, (which was true), that he had not been at Meſſina; that of Montalbert it was impoſſible any thing could yet be known, and

and that all they could do was to wait with patience for the next day, when, if they were not viſited again by a new ſhock, the ſurvivors might be able to know the extent of their loſs.

The mournful manner in which Alozzi uttered this, gave to Roſalie the moſt poignant alarm. Without reflecting how natural it was for him to ſpeak thus, if only the general misfortune of the country was conſidered, of which he bore himſelf a ſhare proportioned to his property, ſhe immediately figured to herſelf that he knew ſomething of Montalbert, and was willing by delay to prepare her for the intelligence he had to give her. She had not, however, power to repeat her queſtions; but a melancholy ſilence was obſerved on all ſides till they reached a houſe, which, with two or three others, were ſituated among olive grounds, and which, Alozzi ſaid, belonged to his eſtate. Theſe buildings had received but little injury, yet the inhabitants of them, ſtill doubting

doubting whether they might remain under their roofs, were ſo terrified and dejected by what had paſſed, and the dread of that which was to come, that the preſence of Alozzi ſeemed to make no impreſſion upon them. They coldly and ſilently acquieſced in affording the accommodation he aſked, for the lady he brought with him, and ſet before the party ſuch food as they happened to have. Zulietta, recovering ſome degree of courage, preſſed Roſalie to eat, and Alozzi watched her with eager and anxious ſolicitude, which, when ſhe obſerved, ſhe imputed to his ſolicitude, or ſorrow for the fate of his friend, which ſhe ſtill fancied he knew.

Fatigue, however, both of mind and body, and the care neceſſary to herſelf for the ſake of her child, overcame for a while her exceſſive anxiety for Montalbert, of whom Alozzi again and again repeated he knew nothing; at length Roſalie conſented to retire with Zulietta to a bed, or rather mattreſs, which the wife

of

of one of the tenants of Alozzi prepared for her, where her child appearing to be in health and in preſent ſafety, ſleep lent a while its friendly aſſiſtance to relieve her ſpirits, and recruit her ſtrength, after ſuch ſufferings and ſuch ſcenes as thoſe of the preceding day.

Her repoſe was broken and diſturbed, for ſhe fancied ſhe heard Montalbert call her, and that the buildings were about to cruſh her and her infant. In the morning, however, ſhe was refreſhed and relieved, even by this partial and interrupted forgetfulneſs, and able to receive the viſit of the Count, who waited on her with inquiries after her health, and to conſult with her what ſhe ſhould do. To this laſt queſtion ſhe was entirely ignorant what to anſwer, and could only, inſtead of a reply, put to him other queſtions; what he believed Montalbert would have directed, had he been preſent? and what he himſelf adviſed.—" It is impoſſible (ſaid he gravely) to tell what Montalbert would

would have done, were he here; but, for myſelf, I own it appears to me that there is only one part to take. It is but too probable that another ſhock will be felt before many days are over. Here I have no longer a houſe to receive me, for that I inhabited at Meſſina is, I know, deſtroyed, though I was not near it yeſterday when the earthquake happened, but about a mile from the town on my way home. The villa, which you did me the honour to inhabit, has ſhared the ſame fate. I approached it; I ſaw part of it buried in the earth, and the reſt is by this time probably reduced to aſhes. What then can I do but quit this devoted country, and return to Naples?—There I have a home, I have friends.—If you, Madam, will put yourſelf under my protection, I will defend you with my life, and conſider myſelf highly honoured by ſo precious a charge."

"To go to Naples! (cried Roſalie, interrupting him);—Ah, Count! Do you recollect how many reaſons I have for wiſhing

wiſhing to avoid Naples?—And is it thither, do you think, Montalbert would conduct me, were he now here?"

"Alas! (replied Alozzi), it is impoſſible to ſay whether thoſe reaſons exiſt which would formerly have influenced him. His mother may no longer be there, or, if ſhe be, it is more than poſſible that pride and pique may be loſt in general calamity, and that at ſuch a time."

"You think then, (ſaid Roſalie, eagerly interrupting him), I am ſure you think that her ſon, that Montalbert, is loſt—or what other calamity would reach her?"

"You exhauſt your ſpirits in vain, my dear Madam, (replied Alozzi); to yield to vague fears can avail nothing. If any evil has befallen my friend, your deſtroying yourſelf cannot recal him—if he lives, as he probably does, you owe it to him to preſerve yourſelf and his ſon."

"Oh! how coolly you talk! (exclaimed Roſalie, falling into an agony of grief). I ſee now that it is indeed eaſy

to

to bear the misfortunes of others with calmneſs."

Alozzi, finding that argument only ſerved to irritate her uneaſineſs, deſiſted, and took the wiſer reſolution of returning to his houſe, to ſee if any thing uſeful to his late gueſts could yet be ſaved; which, though improbable, was not impoſſible. He communicated his intentions to Zulietta, who, with the true chambermaid's eagerneſs to find her few fineries, immediately aſked leave to accompany him. Her terrors were now diſſipated, or greatly weakened, for ſhe was not of a diſpoſition to be very ſolicitous about others, and thought herſelf not only in preſent ſecurity, but in the way of returning to Naples, which ſhe had long been very deſirous of doing. She tripped away, therefore, with the Count and his ſervant, leaving her miſtreſs at the houſe where they had ſlept, and whither Alozzi propoſed to return in a few hours.

When they were gone Roſalie went out with her baby in her arms, and ſeated

ed herſelf on an open piece of ground, about a hundred yards from the houſe, which commanded from between the ſtems of a few ſtraggling olive trees an extenſive view of the city of Meſſina and the country round it. It preſented a ſtrange contraſt of beauty and deſtruction. Thoſe parts of the country that had not been convulſed or inverted were adorned with the bloſſoms of the almond, waving over fields of various coloured lupines and lentiſcus; hedges of myrtles divided the encloſures, and among them the pomegranate was coming into flower; the ſtock doves in innumerable flocks were returning to feed among them, or fluttering amidſt the purple and white bloſſoms of the caper trees: but within half a mile of this profuſion of what is moſt ſoothing to the imagination, black and hideous gulphs, from whence peſtilential vapours ſeemed to iſſue, defaced the lovely landſcape. The beautiful town of Meſſina ſeemed more than half deſtroyed, and now Roſalie ſaw not far from her many groups

of

of ſufferers, who, frantic from the loſs of their friends, their children, or their ſubſtance, were wandering about the fields without any hope but of paſſing the next night as they had done part of the preceding one, under the canopy of Heaven, gazing with tearleſs eyes on the melancholy ſpot where all their hopes were buried. From the ſight of miſery, which ſhe could not relieve, her ſick heart recoiled; ſhe walked ſlowly back to the houſe, and attempted but in vain to form ſome reſolution as to her future plans; but ſuch was her ſituation, and ſo entirely did ſhe feel herſelf dependent on the Count, that this was hardly poſſible..... Again, in a convulſive ſigh, ſhe repeated the name of Montalbert—again implored the mercy of Heaven for him and her child, on whoſe little face, as it was preſſed to her boſom, her tears fell in ſhowers!

She turned her fearful eyes on the people among whom ſhe was left. Many were now in the houſe whom ſhe had

not

not ſeen before, and ſome among them gave her but too forcibly the idea of thoſe banditti, of whom Zulietta had expreſſed ſo many fears the evening before as they paſſed through the woods. Some of them were men of large ſtature, in a kind of uniform, and ſhe fancied that they paſſed through the room where ſhe was on purpoſe to obſerve her. A new ſpecies of terror aſſailed her in conſequence of this remark, yet ſhe endeavoured to reaſon herſelf out of it, and to ſuppoſe that where Count Alozzi had left her ſhe muſt be in ſecurity.

The people, who appeared to belong to the houſe, brought her ſome ſlender meal, which ſhe eat mechanically, and would then have queſtioned them as to the probability of the Count's return, and the diſtance to his late reſidence; but they appeared averſe to any converſation, and ſhe thought looked as if they wiſhed her away, but of their real motives ſhe had not the remoteſt idea.

Hours

Hours paſſed away, and neither Alozzi nor Zulietta appeared. Many new faces entered the houſe, and ſhe underſtood, from ſuch converſation as ſhe heard and put together, that they were come to obtain an aſylum for the night. One of them was a lovely Sicilian girl, of ſixteen or ſeventeen, who wept grievouſly, as Roſalie comprehended, for the loſs of her ſiſter and her ſiſter's children. The beauty of the little Montalbert, as he lay ſleeping in his mother's arms, ſeemed to intereſt and affect this young perſon; ſhe ſpoke to Roſalie, and was approaching to careſs the child, when an old woman who was with her ſaid ſomething in a ſharp and ſevere accent, and drew her haſtily out of the room.

This circumſtance, and indeed every remark ſhe now made, increaſed the impatience and uneaſineſs with which ſhe waited for the return of Alozzi. Night was at hand; the parties in the houſe were contriving how to paſs it moſt at their eaſe, but nobody ſeemed to attend to

her; on the contrary, ſhe believed that a diſpoſition to ſhun her was evident in the women, while the looks of the men gave her infinitely more alarm, and ſhe ſometimes reſolved, rather than paſs the night among them, to ſet out alone, and ſeek the protection of Alozzi.

On this then ſhe had almoſt determined, and, trembling and faint, left the houſe with an intention of diſcovering how far ſuch an attempt might be ſafer than to remain where ſhe was. She had proceeded only about a hundred yards, when a new convulſion of the earth threw her down, and her ſenſes entirely forſook her; nor did ſhe recover her recollection till ſhe found herſelf on board a ſmall veſſel at ſea, her child lying by her, and a woman, whom ſhe had never ſeen before, watching her. As ſoon as ſhe appeared to be ſenſible Alozzi came to her, endeavouring to ſooth and conſole her. He told her, that another ſhock of an earthquake had compelled all who could leave Sicily to depart; that he had before

engaged

engaged a bark; that they were now far on their way to Naples with a fair wind, and that they ſhould be there in a few hours.

The ſhock ſhe had received, the terror and confuſion with which ſhe was yet impreſſed, were ſuch as left Roſalie little ſenſation but that ever predominant one of love and anxiety for her infant boy, whom ſhe clapſed with more fondneſs than ever to her breaſt, and, amidſt the terrors that on every ſide ſurrounded her, found in his preſervation ſomething for which to be grateful to Heaven.

CHAP. XXII.

WHEN the veſſel, freighted with theſe wretched victims of calamity, reached the port of Naples, Roſalie was carried on ſhore with the reſt almoſt inſenſible. The woman, whom Alozzi had placed about her during the voyage, was extremely careful of her and her child; he appeared to have ſuffered much leſs than might have been expected. The anxiety of Roſalie for his ſafety recalled her to life and recollection, but with theſe came the cruel remembrance of all ſhe had ſuffered, and the dread of all ſhe might yet have to encounter: youth, and a good conſtitution hitherto unbroken by misfortune, were on her ſide. With her the ſoothing voice of hope had not yet been ſilenced by frequent diſappointment; a few

few hours of repoſe, therefore, with the conſcioufneſs of preſent ſafety, gave her ſtrength of mind to look ſteadily on the proſpect before her, obſcured as it was by uncertainty and fear.

A ſtranger in Naples, and without the means of inquiring of any one but Alozzi, who ſaw her only for a few moments every day, ſhe continued to torment herſelf with vague and fruitleſs conjectures as to the fate of Montalbert, of whom ſhe inceſſantly ſpoke to the Count, entreating him to make every inquiry, and, above all, to viſit Signora Belcaſtro, his mother, as the probability of Montalbert's ſafety could be gueſſed at only by calculating the time of his departure. To theſe earneſt and continual applications Alozzi at firſt anſwered by promiſing to do as ſhe deſired; after three or four days he ſaid, he was informed by the ſervants that their lady was gone to Rome; that Mr. Montalbert left Naples about ten days before her, but whither he was gone they were ignorant.

This account Roſalie thought Alozzi delivered with a degree of ſang-froid very unlike his uſual manner, eſpecially when ſo dear a friend as Montalbert was concerned. It ſerved, therefore, only to irritate her impatience and awaken new fears. She was now entirely dependent on Count Alozzi, and though ſhe was unconſcious of that jealouſy which had rendered Montalbert uneaſy before their laſt parting, ſhe was ſenſible that it was extremely improper for a woman of her age to remain under the protection of ſuch a man as Alozzi, who was not related to her, and who had, ſhe knew, the reputation of a libertine. Variety of apprehenſions aſſailed her, from which ſhe knew not how to eſcape. Though ſhe was ignorant of Montalbert's particular ſuſpicions, ſhe had often remarked with concern that general tendency to jealouſy, which was almoſt the only blemiſh ſhe had diſcovered in his character; and it was but too probable, that when they met again, (for the idea of Montalbert's death her heart

heart repelled as ſoon as it approached), their meeting, and perhaps their future lives, might be embittered by the uneaſineſs her preſent ſituation would create his mind. Nor was that all. In what a light might ſhe not be repreſented to his mother, already too much prejudiced againſt her.

However perplexed by theſe conſiderations, Roſalie was under the cruel neceſſity of keeping them within her own breaſt; for how could ſhe ſpeak of them to Alozzi?—The woman, who had ſupplied the place of Zulietta, was not only of an inferior deſcription, but was reſolutely ſilent when queſtioned on any ſubject whatever; and all Roſalie could learn of her maid was, that, during the hurry and confuſion of their embarkation, Zulietta was among thoſe who had been left on ſhore, where the waves ſoon after roſe ſo ſuddenly that they ſwept off a multitude of people in their reflux, and it was more than probable this unfortunate girl

was drowned. Of the woman, now her attendant, who was called Maddalena, ſhe was told, that ſhe had loſt her huſband at Meſſina, and that he had been Maitre d'Hotel to the Count at his houſe in that city; Maddalena had fled to the villa, and had arrived juſt as thoſe were embarking whom the Count admitted into the veſſel. This ſtory, however probable, and however confirmed by the account Alozzi himſelf had given, was told by Maddalena with an air ſo calm and even cold, that Roſalie could not help doubting of its truth, and thought it impoſſible, that, had ſhe ſuſtained ſuch a loſs, ſhe could have ſpoken of them with ſo little emotion.

However that might be, ſhe was perfectly convinced that Alozzi had given this woman orders, which ſhe ſeemed determined to obey. Day after day paſſed; on ſome of them the Count did not appear, on others he ſat with her an hour or two, endeavouring to keep up ſome-

thing

thing that might reſemble common converſation; but the moment Roſalie ſpoke of Montalbert, of her increaſing anguiſh of heart, of the aukwardneſs of her ſituation, and of the burden ſhe muſt neceſſarily feel herſelf to him, Alozzi ſeemed impatient to put an end to his viſit, ſtill perſiſting to ſay, however, when he could not entirely evade her queſtions, that he believed in the ſafety of Montalbert. But there was ſomething in his manner of ſaying this, that gave Roſalie greater pain than if he had ſpoken more doubtfully. There ſeemed to be ſome myſtery for which ſhe could not account, and a careleſſneſs as to the fate of his former friend, which was quite unnatural. Alozzi, it is true, treated her with great reſpect; he appeared hurt at the remoteſt hint of any trouble ſhe might give him, and ſaid fine things as to the delight it afforded him to be of any uſe to her. Theſe ſort of ſpeeches he had not unfrequently made while Montalbert was preſent and they lived together at the Sicilian villa; but

now they were made in another manner, and Roſalie ſhrunk from them with ſomething like terror and diſguſt.

Anxiety, ſuch as at this time aſſailed her, could not long be patiently endured. The natural ſtrength of her underſtanding told her, that to remain under the protection of the Count, and concealed in an obſcure lodging at Naples, muſt in the event be infinitely more prejudicial to her future happineſs with Montalbert, if he yet lived, than even the diſcovery in regard to his mother, which had formerly been the ſource of ſo much uneaſineſs. If Montalbert was loſt, how could ſhe think of ſuffering his ſon to remain in obſcurity, without claiming for him the protection of his father's family, and the fortune, ſmall as it might be, that belonged to him?—This idea gathered ſtrength from hour to hour as ſhe indulged it.—She looked at her ſon, who viſibly improved in health and beauty, and reproached herſelf for the injury ſhe was doing him by the concealment of a ſecret, which,

perhaps,

perhaps, there might be no danger in revealing; or, if there was, which could affect only herſelf.

She conſidered, that if Montalbert had been a moment in danger, and was reſtored in ſafety to his mother, ſhe would hardly at ſuch a time refuſe him her pardon. If, on the contrary, his fate was uncertain, if he had ſailed for Meſſina before the tremendous cataſtrophe which had happened there, and was not yet returned, the fears his mother muſt entertain for his life would ſurely prevent her driving from her the fatherleſs child, for whom ſhe ſhould implore her pity and protection; for herſelf ſhe had nothing to aſk, but to be received as the mother of that child. Almoſt convinced, by this reaſoning, that ſhe ought immediately to throw herſelf at the feet of Signora Belcaſtro, ſhe formed plans for proceeding, and even thought that, if they ſucceeded, Montalbert would be made completely happy by this reconciliation. Fully poſſeſſed by this deſign,

ſhe knew there was no way of executing it without the participation and even the aſſiſtance of Alozzi, to whom ſhe took the firſt opportunity to explain her plans and her reaſons for adopting them, deſiring Alozzi to make immediate inquiries as to the probability of Signora Belcaſtro's return to Naples; or, if that was not likely to happen ſoon, ſhe deſired to be put in a way of addreſſing her properly at Rome.

The Count heard her with unaffected aſtoniſhment, and with anger and concern, which he in vain attempted to ſtifle; he obſerved, from her manner, that ſhe had long thought of what ſhe now ſpoke upon. He liſtened, however, with as much patience as he could command, and then ſet himſelf to prove to her the wildneſs and impoſſibility of what ſhe propoſed; the injury it might be to Montalbert, the riſk it would be to herſelf. He repreſented Signora Belcaſtro as the moſt violent and vindictive of Italian women, and bade

Roſalie

Roſalie conſider how ſhe could meet the eye, or endure the reproaches, of ſuch a perſon? How bear to be treated with contempt and inſult, if, as was very probable, Signora Belcaſtro proteſted againſt the legitimacy of the little Montalbert? Or how, on the contrary, ſupport his being torn from her, which, Alozzi proteſted, ſhe might expect, ſhould the capricious paſſions of his grandmother take another turn?

Roſalie liſtened and ſhuddered, but ſtill perſiſted in declaring, that if in two days no news arrived of Montalbert, ſhe would adopt this expedient of claiming for his child the protection of his own family, and, conſcious that in doing ſo had done her duty, would leave the event to Heaven.

Theſe two days Alozzi hardly ever left her, nor did he omit any argument to diſſuade her from, what he termed, a ſcheme of the wildeſt deſperation. Some expreſſions, however, that he let fall in the warmth of this debate, ſerved only

to

to confirm her reſolution. She told him very calmly, that many of the reaſons he had given againſt her acting as ſhe propoſed ſeemed to her to be the very reaſons why ſhe ſhould purſue her plan; that ſhe ſhould have been very much obliged to him would he have lent her his aſſiſtance; but added, with a degree of reſolution ſhe had never exerted before, that ſince he declined it, ſhe knew there were Engliſhmen at Naples, and ſhe was ſure, that when her ſituation was known, there was not one of them but what would come forward to protect and ſupport her.

A flood of tears followed this temporary exertion of artificial courage, for her forlorn and friendleſs condition preſſed more forcibly than it had ever yet done on her mind; ſhe caught her child to her boſom, and ſobbed with a violence of grief which ſhe was no longer able to command.—Alozzi, almoſt thrown off his guard by the mingled emotions he felt, and alarmed by the mention of her appealing to her

her own countrymen, now endeavoured to ſooth and appeaſe her. He beſought her to give him a little more time to make inquiries after his friend, from people who were every day coming in from Sicily; repreſented how poſſible it was that he might yet be ſeeking her there, and gave ſo many plauſible reaſons why ſhe ought to wait a little longer before ſhe took a meaſure which ſhe might repent when it would be too late, that, at length, he extorted a promiſe from her to do nothing without his knowledge, and to wait at leaſt another week.

This week, the third of her arrival at Naples, was rapidly paſſing away. No news of Montalbert arrived, and now Alozzi affected extreme concern whenever he was ſpoken of, and the tormenting ſuſpenſe of his unfortunate wife became almoſt inſupportable. Her former plan was again thought of: if it was followed by none of the advantages ſhe hoped for, ſhe ſhould at leaſt learn what was by

his

his own family ſuppoſed to be the fate of Montalbert, of which it was improbable they ſhould be as ignorant as ſhe was. Even at the moment when ſhe was ſuffering all the miſery of conjecture, it was poſſible he might be at Naples, as uncertain in regard to her fate as ſhe was of his; and what other means but thoſe ſhe now thought of, had ſhe to diſcover whether he yet lived?

Among the variety of thoughts that offered themſelves as ſhe conſidered this ſubject, there was one which ſhe wondered had never occurred to her before. This was, that Charles Vyvian was certainly in Italy, and might very probably be at Naples: what a conſolation it would be to ſee him, even though ſhe dared not reveal how nearly they were related!— She, therefore, buſied herſelf in contriving means to diſcover the names of the Engliſh who were now at Naples; but, upon examining this nearer, ſhe found it knowledge that was very difficult for her

to

to obtain. Of the people of the houſe where ſhe lodged ſhe knew nothing; they had never once appeared in her ſight, and her cook was, as Alozzi told her, a Sicilian, who had come over in the ſame veſſel with them, whom he had taken out of pity into his ſervice; but when Roſalie attempted to ſpeak to him, by way of giving him commiſſions, ſhe found him to be a fellow who had orders to evade executing them, and perfectly knew his part; ſhe even fancied ſhe had ſeen him before, though ſhe could not recollect where or when. As to the woman, ſhe declined doing any thing, and her reaſons too were plauſible; ſhe was a ſtranger at Naples; ſhe did not even know her way in the ſtreets. How was it poſſible for her to do what Signora Roſalia deſired? And how could ſhe go to inquire after Engliſh Signors?—and where?——

"Ah, Signora! (ſaid the artful Italian, venturing now on a liberty ſhe had never taken before)——Ah, Signora! If you ſhould find thoſe rich and great Signori Ingleſe,

Ingleſe, do you think there is among them a finer or a nobler gentleman than Count Alozzi?"

Roſalie to this impertinence gave a cold and haughty anſwer. It ſunk, however, deeply into her mind; but ſhould ſhe reſent it as it deſerved, ſhe might, perhaps, deprive her child of the cares of this woman, and it was poſſible another would be leſs attentive and leſs experienced: nor had ſhe, indeed, the means of diſcharging her, or could ſhe conſider her as being her ſervant.

The obſervations which every hour forced themſelves upon her mind, were at length ſo accumulated and ſo painful, that ſome immediate relief became neceſſary; but where was it to be found? Stranger and depreſſed as ſhe was at her firſt arrival, ſhe had neither ſtrength nor inclination to go out; nor had ſhe then a change of clothes to appear in. Alozzi had ſupplied her with every article of dreſs in profuſion; but of theſe ſhe had forborne to take more than was abſolutely

lutely neceſſary, not knowing whether Montalbert could ever repay his friend theſe pecuniary obligations.

Now, indeed, the weight of them became intolerable, for Roſalie, having once had her fears awakened that the intentions of Alozzi were diſhonourable, ſeized with trembling avidity on every circumſtance that confirmed theſe fears; and, as generally happens in theſe caſes, they went even beyond the truth, and ſhe figured to herſelf the many imaginary evils: that Signora Belcaſtro had never been abſent from Naples; that her ſon was even now there, deceived by the artifices of his treacherous friend, and perhaps lamenting as dead the wife and infant who actually exiſted in the ſame city—then a train of frightful poſſibilities followed. Convinced of her death by the report of Alozzi, he might determine to oblige his mother and give his hand to the Roman lady, whom ſhe was ſo deſirous of his marrying. He might then, perhaps, leave

Naples

Naples for the neighbourhood of Rome, ſhe ſhould loſe ſight of him for ever, and, with her helpleſs, deſerted boy, become a forſaken wanderer upon earth.

With theſe terrors ſleep forſook the pillow of Roſalie, and peace no longer viſited her for a moment during the day. The ſight of her child, but yeſterday a balm to her anxious heart, no longer afforded her unmixed delight; his innocent eyes and unconſcious ſmiles ſeemed to reproach her for timidity, which, while it was unworthy of herſelf, might irreparably injure both his father and him.

By theſe reflections her wavering reſolution was at laſt ſo confirmed, that ſhe determined to write to the mother of Montalbert; and as ſhe could imagine no other ſafe or even poſſible way of conveying it, ſhe determined, when her letter was written, to direct it in the moſt correct manner ſhe could, and walking into the ſtreet give it to the firſt lazzerone ſhe found; ſuch a perſon could have no intereſt

intereſt in deceiving her; and as ſhe intended to give him a ſmall reward when ſhe delivered the letter, and promiſe one more conſiderable when he had executed her commiſſion, ſhe thought ſhe ſhould at all events obtain information ſo very material to her, as whether Signora Belcaſtro was now at her houſe at Naples.

This plan ſhe executed without difficulty, becauſe, among all the attempts to write that Alozzi had guarded againſt, that of her giving herſelf the letter to the firſt ſhe met of the numerous lazzeroni in the ſtreets of Naples, was what had never occurred to him as poſſible.

The letter was long and explanatory, and, if not written in the very pureſt Italian, was infinitely better than many Italian natives could themſelves have penned. It contained expreſſions of the tendereſt nature towards Montalbert; of humility and deference for his mother, on whoſe pity and protection ſhe threw herſelf, and with whom ſhe pleaded for her infant

infant boy with a pathos which few hearts could have reſiſted.

Having then ſealed and directed it, ſhe took her child in her arms, and, her attendant being engaged in another part of the houſe, walked down into the ſtreet; ſhe trembled as ſhe looked around her, and ſhrunk from the eyes of the few paſſengers that ſhe ſaw. Such a perſon, however, as ſhe had occaſion for was ſoon found. A ſtout boy of ſixteen, half cloathed, eagerly preſented himſelf; Roſalie, in a hurried and faltering voice, gave him his commiſſion and two carlinoes*, promiſing him double that ſum if he returned within an hour to the houſe ſhe had left, which ſhe pointed out to him, and gave her the information ſhe required. The lad promiſed to do all ſhe directed, and ſprang out of ſight in an inſtant. Roſalie, hardly able to ſupport herſelf, returned to her apart-

* A Carlino is 5d. Engliſh.

ments,

ments, from which ſhe had not even been miſſed. The die was now caſt. The future happineſs or miſery of herſelf and child depended on the anſwer to this letter: breathleſs with fear, ſhe awaited the return of her meſſenger, who came back almoſt immediately; ſhe flew to the door, the lad told her, that Signora Belcaſtro was at Naples, and that he had given the packet to one of her ſervants, who would deliver it to his lady. It was now then certain, that Alozzi had deceived her..... Alas! it was certain too, that, in this attempt to emancipate herſelf from his power, ſhe had been compelled to commit her whole happineſs to a woman, whoſe proud and vindictive character ſhe now thought upon with more terror than ever. It was, however, too late to recede, nor did ſhe wiſh to do ſo, but armed herſelf with the fortitude conſcious integrity ought to give, and determined to endure whatever ſhould happen, while no wilful imprudence or impropriety could be imputed to her.

Her

Her own words will now be uſed to deſcribe how far ſhe was enabled to act as ſhe propoſed; when doubting of the exiſtence of him to whom her letters were addreſſed, ſhe yet found relief in relating her ſufferings, and in keeping a regiſter of the melancholy moments as they paſſed.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXIII.

A Letter from ROSALIE *to* MONTALBERT.

" WHEN conſciouſneſs of exiſtence returns only to bring with it the conſciouſneſs of miſery—can I feel any ſatisfaction in recollection?—Yet I might have been more wretched—I might have been driven quite to diſtraction; for my little angel Harry might have been torn from me—but he is ſtill with me, ſtill the innocent, unconſcious companion of his mother's ſufferings!

" Where art thou, Montalbert?—Alas! if thou hadſt really been loſt at Meſſina, as that treacherous Alozzi inſinuated, would it be worth the pains that are now taken to perſecute thy unhappy wife; to arraign the legality of thy ſon's birth?—

Ah! no, Montalbert!—thy cruel mother would then have left me to my ignominious fate, or, if common humanity had touched the heart of Signora Belcaſtro with pity for an unprotected ſtranger, ſhe would have ſent me and my child to England, where we could never have offended her more. But, Montalbert, the huſband and the father lives, and his inhuman parent knows, that in whatever country we are, his unwearied love will diſcover us, unleſs we are hidden in ſome hideous priſon like this. Barbarous Belcaſtro, it is thus that your cruelty defeats itſelf!—for amidſt theſe dreary ſcenes this reflection ſupports and conſoles me.—I dwell upon it inceſſantly—I convince myſelf that Montalbert lives—I preſs his little Harry to my heavy heart, and feel it leſs agonized as I determine to attempt to live for them both.

" In the confidence that you, Montalbert, live for me, I tried, when I firſt recovered myſelf from terrors that almoſt deprived me of my reaſon, to give you

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ſome account of the letter I wrote at Naples to your mother, which was undoubtedly the cauſe of all that has ſince befallen me. It is now before me, incoherent and half-blotted with my tears; but it deſcribes what I felt, and I will not alter it. It ends at the point of time when I was perſuaded I ſhould have an anſwer, and when my ſanguine hopes flattered me that it would be favourable.

" I looked at our boy, and thought that, if once your mother ſaw him, his beauty, and his ſtrong reſemblance to you, would ſecure her kindneſs..... I knew that I ſhould tremble and falter; but yet I believed I could acquire courage enough to put him into her arms, with a few words which I meditated to ſpeak. I perſuaded myſelf, that infant lovelineſs and the voice of nature would do the reſt. But the hours paſſed away, and no ſummons came for us, as I had fondly expected. I concluded that I ſhould hear the next morning, and I endeavoured to compoſe myſelf for the night.

" It paſſed, however, in reſtleſſneſs and anxiety; but day came, and with it my ſpirits regained ſome degree of tranquillity. I dreſſed my baby with more care than I had done the preceding day, and again ſat down to hopes, fears, and conjectures — the hours wore away as on ordinary days, and I received neither letter nor meſſage. The Count Alozzi* paid me his daily viſit, but it was ſhorter than uſual, and he either did not obſerve, or at leaſt did not ſpeak to me of that anxiety, which, I thought, my looks and manner muſt have betrayed.

" Night came, and I now concluded that either Signora Belcaſtro would not condeſcend to notice me at all, or that her deliberating ſo long was a favourable circumſtance; for, had ſhe haſtily and arrogantly determined to cruſh my hopes

* In her account of the reaſons why ſhe determined to write to his mother, Roſalie omitted thoſe that related to Alozzi; ſhe thought enough ſtill remained to juſtify her taking ſuch a ſtep.

for

for ever, it was moſt probable, that, a temper ſo irritable and violent as hers, ſhe would have done it at once, and with as much rage as her contempt would ſuffer her to ſhew.

" In this perſuaſion then, which was calculated to calm my ſpirits as much as under ſuch circumſtances they would admit of being calmed, I again laid myſelf down by the ſide of my ſleeping boy, and, notwithſtanding the anxiety of my thoughts, fatigue overcame me, and I was loſt in a dream that brought you, Montalbert, to my view.....I imagined, that, reconciled to your mother, and in poſſeſſion of all our wiſhes, I was recounting to you the ſad ſcenes which I had witneſſed at Meſſina, when, ſuddenly awakened by a noiſe in my room, I ſaw a man, holding a ſmall lantern, approach my bed, followed by one or two others. I ſhrieked with terror, and inquired, as well as I could, what they would have—and who they were?—One of them came near me, and, in a

deep and ſolemn voice, told me that I muſt riſe, dreſs myſelf, and follow them. I aſked, why? and whither I was to go?—I implored their mercy—I earneſtly entreated they would tell who had ſent them, and on what pretence I was thus to be dragged from my bed?—To theſe queſtions, the men told me, they neither could nor would anſwer; and one of them, more ſavage than the reſt, approached to take my child, telling me, that he ſuppoſed, if he took little maſter, I ſhould be pleaſed to follow. This cruel menace drove me to madneſs. I ſnatched my child to my boſom, proteſting that I would die before he ſhould be forced from me; but that, if I muſt follow them, and they would only ſend my woman to me, and retire while I put on my clothes, that I would endeavour to obey.

"As to a woman, they told me, none could be allowed me; that I muſt quit that houſe immediately; and that, if I would haſten, they would wait at the door till

till I was ready with the child. This laſt word gave me ſome degree of courage, for the dread of loſing my boy had been more terrible than all the reſt. I promiſed every thing required of me, and aſked if I might not take ſome clothes? for I now concluded I was going to priſon. They anſwered, that I might take what I would; but that I muſt be expeditious, and that ſilence would avail me more than remonſtrance or complaint.

"The men then left the room, and I tried to acquire ſteadineſs enough to dreſs myſelf. My infant needed little but a mantle in which I wrapped him, and our clothes were in two ſmall trunks that ſtood near my bed. I had, therefore, nothing to pack, and was ſoon ready; but, expeditious as I had been, my conductors were become impatient, and I had hardly hurried on my things, and wrapped a large cloke round us both, before they entered, and, by the light of the ſame lantern, conducted me down the ſtairs, on which ſtood two or three other

men; an equal number were in the paſſage, and two others, who ſtood at the door like ſentinels, opened it, where I ſaw a coach, into which they lifted me; the man who ſeemed to have the moſt authority ſeated himſelf oppoſite to me, and it drove away.

"The night was extremely dark, yet I could not, even had it been otherwiſe, have formed the leaſt idea whither they were carrying me..... What a ſituation was mine!—Alone at ſuch a time of night, with men whom I could conſider no otherwiſe than as the banditti and aſſaſſins of whom I had often read in Italian ſtories. The ſtrangeneſs and alarm of ſuch a ſtate alone enabled me to endure it, for I ſeemed petrified, and had no power to complain or to ſhed a tear. The man who was with me ſpoke not, and when I attempted to make any inquiries, which I once or twice collected enough courage to do, he gravely, but not uncivilly, told me, he could not anſwer them, and that it was merely fatiguing my ſpirits to aſk any queſtions

queſtions whatever. I know not how far we had travelled, when the coach ſtopped at a houſe where I was taken out by the attendants, who ſeemed as numerous as before, led into a dreary room, which I thought belonged to an inn, and left to myſelf for a few moments. Some refreſhment was then brought, and the man who had attended me in the coach came in at the ſame time, and ſeated himſelf at the table: he bade me eat, and I obeyed him on account of my infant; he eat heartily himſelf, yet ſpoke very little, and wore his hat pulled over his face, which, by the glimmering light of a lamp that hung in the room, appeared, I thought, to be the face of an aſſaſſin, and not young in his profeſſion; for the man was between fifty and ſixty, tall, bony, and hard-featured, with hollow eyes and large eyebrows, under which he ſeemed ſometimes to examine my countenance with a look that made my heart ſink within me.

" When the moſt diſmal meal I had ever made was over, he told me we muſt renew our journey. I obeyed in ſilence, and we travelled the reſt of the night, ſtopping twice to change horſes.

" When morning broke, I found we were in a mountainous country: between the high points of land, among which our road lay, I caught glimpſes of the ſea, and a faint and vague hope preſented itſelf that I might be deſtined to ſome port remote from Naples to be ſent to England. For none of the various conjectures, which, during this melancholy journey, paſſed through my mind, were ſo probable, as that the mother of Montalbert, enraged at what ſhe had heard, and determined, at all events, to divide me from her ſon, had taken this method to conceal me from him while he was, perhaps, perſuaded that I had periſhed in Sicily. With this hope, therefore, I looked out anxiouſly for the element, which, I hoped, might reſtore me to my country, where

where I was ſure the vigilant love of Montalbert would ſoon follow me..... Ah! vain and flattering illuſion!—I indulged it only to embitter the miſerable moments which have ſince paſſed; and, as they paſſed, have told me that, though Montalbert lives, I ſhall ſee him no more.

"I muſt lay down my pen, and try to conquer the tears which half efface the words I have written, and which will make my letter illegible.

"I have taken a few turns in the gallery—my little Harry in my arms..... Oh! would he could anſwer when I talk to him of his dear father—he ſmiles innocently as if he already underſtood me!—If he ſhould be ill in this deſolate place—what would become of me!—The idea freezes my heart; but, alas! why ſhould I torment myſelf with poſſible miſeries, when I have ſo many real ones. Heaven ſure will ſpare me from a trial to which I feel my ſtrength altogether unequal. I know that I ought to check theſe gloomy

thoughts, and to preſerve my own health, if I would avoid the diſtreſſes they repreſent to me.

"But this is, indeed, difficult, Montalbert!—The poor ſolitary Roſalie has no human being to liſten to her complaints, or to ſtrengthen her reſolution. Day after day ſhe wanders round the deſerted apartments of this melancholy houſe; ſhe ſees the faces of two ſervants, mean, ignorant, and without pity, who perform, in ſilence, the common offices of life, but ſeem totally inſenſible of the ſtate of mind of their wretched priſoner: even the beauty of my lovely child does not plead with theſe people for him, or for me!

"But I ſhall exhauſt myſelf in lamenting my preſent ſituation, and become unable to purſue my narrative.

"I go back then to relate the ſequel of my melancholy journey, which continued all that day and the next, with only ſhort intervals of reſt; one of theſe was at a lone inn, on the ſteep aſcent of a mountain, where my conductors put up, rather,

rather, I believe, to avoid the violence of a ſtorm that was likely to overtake them on the top of it, than to afford me and my child the repoſe we greatly needed.

" Imagine, Montalbert, your unhappy wife ſitting in one of the moſt diſmal places imagination can conceive; the walls were of brick, and concealed only by the dirt that in moſt places covered them; there were neither ſaſhes nor ſhutters to the windows, through which the lightning flaſhed, and the rain drove with fearful violence: but I had lately beheld convulſions of nature ſo much more dreadful, that I ſaw this tempeſt without any additional terror. Had I been ſure that ſuch a deſtiny awaited me as I have ſince experienced, I ſhould, perhaps, have been more than indifferent, and have implored ſome friendly ſtroke which might have ended mine and my child's life..... Alas! for what are we reſerved?

" I looked at the group, which was aſſembled in the ſame room, with alarm infinitely

infinitely greater than what I felt from the tempeſt without, violent as it was. I have ſeen paintings, Montalbert, repreſenting ſuch people; but in England we have no ſuch faces, at leaſt I never ſaw ſuch!

"The men, however, ſeemed ſo well pleaſed with their quarters, that they were in no haſte to depart, and I was afraid we ſhould have paſſed the night in that hideous place: I could not imagine any thing that might await me at the end of my journey, more dreary, forlorn, and dangerous, for the people of the houſe ſeemed to be ſuch as I remember reading a deſcription of in one of Smollet's novels. Willingly, therefore, I obeyed the ſignal which my companion in the coach, at length, gave for us to proceed forward.

"The remaining part of our journey laſted until, at a late hour in the night, I was removed into one of the carriages of the country, and we again travelled in darkneſs, very ſlowly, through roads where a common coach or chaiſe could not paſs, and which would have given me at another

another time great fears; but I was now ſo worn down with fatigue, and ſo bewildered in diſtracting conjectures of what was to come, that the preſent evil was leſs felt; nor ſhould I, I think, have ſhrunk from death, could I have been aſſured that my infant would not ſurvive me.

"At length, however, as nearly as I could conjecture, about three in the morning of the third night, we arrived at the place, where the man who was in the carriage told me, I was to remain.

"I was ſo enfeebled and diſpirited, ſo cramped with a long and fatiguing journey, and ſo worn down with anguiſh of mind, that I was unable to aſſiſt myſelf in getting out of the coach. The men, however, took me with as much eaſe as they did my little boy, and a coarſe-looking man, who came out of the houſe, carried a light before us up a long and ſteep flight of ſteps. They led to a large hall, paved and lined with marble: it was

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ſo large, and ſo cold, that I fancied myſelf already in the catacombs; but, alas! I could not weep—I felt the blood forſaking my heart, which ſeemed to beat no longer. I ſat down, however, as the people bade me, till the baggage was brought out of the coach.

" The few ideas, which fatigue and terror left me, pointed to impriſonment as what was certainly to be my lot, and I expected to be led to ſome dungeon beneath this immenſe apartment, and left to periſh. After ſome moments, my conductor approached me: he told me, that here his commiſſion ended; that he had orders to leave me in this houſe, where the neceſſaries of life would be provided for me, and from whence he need ſcarce adviſe me not to attempt to eſcape, for eſcape was impoſſible, as I was far removed from all who had any knowledge of me, and the whole country was devoted to his employer.

' And who is your employer, Sir? (ſaid I); tell me, at leaſt, that—that I may know

know by what right, or on what account, I am become a priſoner.'

'You may think yourſelf fortunate, (returned the man), that you are in the hands of thoſe who do not uſe all the power they poſſeſs; your treatment will in ſome meaſure depend on yourſelf. The people here can do nothing to aſſiſt your flight, even if you ſhould be weak enough to tempt them; but I adviſe you to content yourſelf with the aſſurance that every effort will be ineffectual; and, that if you give much trouble to the perſons in whoſe care you remain, your confinement will be made more ſtrict and ſevere.'

"To this I had nothing to reply, nor did the man ſtay to hear any farther remonſtrance, but haſtily left this gloomy apartment, and as dead a ſilence reigned as if I had been already buried alive.

"The immenſe hall, or rather cave of marble, was lighted only by a lamp that ſtood on a diſtant table, and it ſeemed to me to have been built for gigantic beings,

beings, ſo great were its dimenſions and ſo heavy its conſtruction.—' And is it here (ſaid I to myſelf, as I ſurveyed the place) that I am left to die, unaided and unknown?—Or am I conſigned to the mercy of the inhabitants of this place?'—Fatigue and fear, overcoming and depreſſing my mind, brought before it ſtrange phantoms more horrible than any reality could be; and ſuch an effect had this comfortleſs ſolitude on my exhauſted ſpirits, that I thought my ſituation on the night of the dreadful concuſſion of the earth, when I took ſhelter in the farm of Alozzi, was infinitely leſs dreadful. So much heavier do preſent evils appear than thoſe that are paſt.

" I believe I had been more than half an hour alone, and began to think I might lie down unmoleſted on the pavement and die, when the door at the farther end of the hall opened ſlowly, and a figure, which I could hardly diſtinguiſh through the gloom, moved ſlowly towards me. When

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it came near, I diſcerned that it was a woman in a kind of nun's dreſs; ſhe ſpoke in a low and ſlow voice. There was ſomething in her language which I did not underſtand; but ſhe ſeemed to invite me to remove from the place were I was. I aroſe, therefore, and followed her; ſhe took up the lamp that was burning on the marble table, and proceeded through long and high paſſages, which appeared to terminate in utter darkneſs.

" At length we came to a very broad ſtaircaſe, which my guide began to aſcend, though very ſlowly, and like a perſon who was either unwilling or unable to arrive very ſoon at the place whither they were going. I looked up and round this great ſtaircaſe. Never could a place be imagined more maſſive, or more impreſſing, fit to convey the idea of a habitation of goblins and ſpectres; almoſt every part was of dark marble, and, in places where ornament was admitted, old paintings, blackened and nearly effaced by time, and

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ſome faded gilding, ſerved but to mark the long deſertion of its owners.

"The top of the ſtairs led into a gallery, which, through a marble baluſtrade, looked down into the great hall I had left, where I ſaw, by a light they had with them, three or four of the men that had accompanied me, who appeared like aſſaſſins aſſembled to decide on the fate of their victim. Yet ſuch were the terrors that had ſeized me, from the uncertainty and ſingularity of my ſituation, that I had more dread of ſupernatural beings, I knew not what, than of theſe men who had ſo lately been the objects of my apprehenſion.

"This ſurrounding gallery opened into another very large room, covered with ſome kind of moſaic painting, and that into another as big, but not in ſo good repair; at the bottom of which was a table with a crucifix upon it. The third door, that my ſilent conductreſs opened, diſcovered a bedchamber of nearly the

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ſame dimenſions as the other two; where a ſmall low bed, that ſtood in one corner, was hardly diſcernable. All ſeemed cold and comfortleſs, and the air was damp and heavy, as if the room had been long without ventilation. My conductreſs led me up to the bed—'This (ſaid ſhe) is your room, Signora Ingleſe, and this your bed.'

"I haſtily aſked, but in a manner the moſt conciliating that I could command, whether I might be allowed a light, a fire, and food?—and proceeded to ſay, how greatly I and my poor little boy were fatigued with a very long journey of ſo many days and nights. The woman, whoſe face I now for the firſt time ſaw, looked at me and the innocent helpleſs creature for which I was pleading. Her countenance, which was ſallow and ſharp-featured, expreſſed rather diſtaſte than pity or tenderneſs; ſhe ſpoke low, and, as I underſtood, declined complying with my requeſt; however, ſhe lit an iron lamp that was faſtened to the wall, and, without

without any more ceremony left me as I believed for the night.

" I heard her footſteps fainter and fainter, as ſhe paſſed through the rooms we had before traverſed; the doors ſhut after her, and again a death-like ſilence reigned. My child was reſtleſs, and I wiſhed to undreſs him; but the comfort of a fire was denied me, and I ſurveyed my bed as if it had been my tomb, hardly daring to lie down upon it, yet feeling that I had no longer ſtrength to ſit up. I determined, therefore, to wrap myſelf and my boy in the cloke we had around us, and ſince I had no change of clothes for him, for my trunks remained in the hall, to attempt huſhing him to repoſe on my breaſt—a breaſt torn, alas! with ſuch variety of anguiſh, that now, though a fortnight has ſince elapſed, I look back upon thoſe hours with a ſenſation of aſtoniſhment, and, recollecting the ſeverity of my ſufferings, am grateful for the power that was lent me to ſuſtain them.

" But

" But I break off here, Montalbert, and muſt recal more perfectly the ſucceeding hours, before I can finiſh this narrative, which I intend as a ſort of prelude to the melancholy regiſter of my time which I have kept.

" I am ſupported, Montalbert, by the hope which in my calmer moments never entirely forſakes me, that we ſhall one day read this journal together, and that, while you ſuffer for the ſorrows of your Roſalie, you will claſp her fondly to your heart, and rejoice that they are no more.

" If that moment ever comes, Montalbert, for what calamities will it not overpay us! "

CHAP.

CHAP. XXIV.

THE next letter from Roſalie to Montalbert thus deſcribed her ſubſequent ſituation.....

"My jailers were, however, leſs ſevere than I had expected. With a feeble ſtep, and a heart overwhelmed with anguiſh, I was exploring, as well as I could, the room I was in, to ſee if it afforded me ſuch ſecurity for the night as depended on bolts or locks: I opened a door on the farther ſide of it, which led into long and high paſſages, and from whence the wind ruſhed with a violence which obliged me to ſhut it haſtily. I was endeavouring to faſten it withinſide, by puſhing the bolt that was too ruſty for my ſtrength to move, when I heard heavy ſteps

ſteps as of ſeveral perſons approaching through the great rooms adjoining. Alarmed, I returned nearer to the light; and, breathleſs and trembling, I waited for the entrance of theſe people. My fears, however, ſomewhat ſubſided, when I ſaw a man, who appeared to be a peaſant, approach with wood, and another with the boxes that contained mine and my child's clothes, while the woman, whom I had ſeen before, ſtood at the door; one of the men made a fire, the other went away, and in a few moments returned with ſome proviſions and wine. Every thing paſſed in profound ſilence, except when it was broken by my attempting to expreſs to the woman, in whom all authority ſeemed to be veſted, my gratitude for theſe indulgencies, and entreated her to allow that the door, to which I pointed acroſs the room, might be faſtened within-ſide. She ordered one of the men to do it, and having placed the ſupper before me, and left a ſmall bundle of wood to feed the fire, they all departed, and I

prepared to recruit my ſtrength and refreſh my poor baby by changing his clothes. He was ſoon in a ſweet ſleep, and now, for the firſt time for many hours, this melioration of my condition afforded me the relief of ſhedding tears. My deſtiny ſtill appeared dreadful, but as there ſeemed to be no deſign to deſtroy my life, I truſted that whoever had taken ſo much trouble to remove me would at length relent, and that I ſhould be one day reſtored to you, Montalbert.

" Determining then to arm myſelf with patience, and to reſign myſelf wholly to that Providence which had hitherto protected me, I laid down on my little bed, after ſecuring as well as I could the other door of the chamber; but, ſtill prepoſſeſſed with an idea of its dampneſs, I dared not undreſs myſelf; fatigue, however, overcame all apprehenſions, and I ſlept ſeveral hours, till the calls of my nurſling awakened me to a ſenſe of his ſorrows and my own.

" I re-

" I recollected inſtantly all that had happened to me, and turned my eyes towards the immenſe windows of my room, between the thick wooden ſhutters of which day appeared. I aroſe, and with ſome difficulty opened one of them, and beheld from it a diverſified landſcape of great extent, terminated on one ſide by the ſea at the diſtance of hardly a mile; a river, which ran from the country on the left of the caſtle, fell into the ocean juſt beneath, where a few mean houſes, intermingled with ſome ruined buildings, gave me the idea of an ancient port; between the place where I was and the ſea the ground was marſhy and cheerleſs, but on each ſide the land formed a mountainous curve, covered with woods, of which another window gave me a more diſtinct view. I opened the caſement by the utmoſt exertion of my ſtrength; and refreſhed by the morning air and the cheering light of the ſun, I took courage to examine the place, where it ſeemed but too probable I was deſtined long to remain.

" I found that I was in an immenſe fortreſs, or caſtle, ſituated on an eminence, and covering for a conſiderable ſpace its unequal ſummit. Great ſquare towers, more ancient than the reſt, projected over the declivity; but the ſpaces between theſe had more the appearance of old Italian houſes, ſuch as I had been uſed to ſee. On the ſide next the ſea there was a deep foſſé, beyond which the hill fell perpendicularly into a ſort of marſh; but on the other ſide, on which the window I had opened looked, it appeared as if that part of it, immediately near the houſe, had once been cultivated as a garden or plantation, for amidſt inequalities, which ſeemed to have been made by human art for the purpoſes of defence, were a few groups of very old cypreſſes, and ſquare encloſures bordered with evergreens, now wild and run into diſorder. Among them I obſerved two or three coloſſal ſtatues and pillars of marble, all of which ſeemed to have ſuffered from violence, for I could perceive that

that they were broken and mutilated: beyond this ground, which I ought, perhaps, to call a garden, the country roſe into very high mountains on each ſide of the river, leaving on its banks a valley of about half a mile in extent, were a few ſtraggling cottages ſurrounded with olive grounds, ſuch as I remember in Sicily, and there were ſome plantations of oranges about the houſes, with vineyards on the hills where the wood was cleared away. Higher mountains cloſed the land proſpect, and the courſe of the river was loſt among them.

" Such appeared, on my firſt ſurvey of it, the place where I was, perhaps, to paſs my life; but, I ſaw the bright ſun above me, I beheld variety of objects illuminated by his beams, I felt the balmy breath of Heaven on my face, which ſeemed to reſtore the enfeebled powers of life. My boy ſmiled on me, and appeared uninjured in his health by the fatigues he had gone through, and hope and peace in ſome meaſure returned.

" In examining, however, and reflecting on my ſituation, I began to be convinced, that what the man, who conducted me, had told me was true; that I was placed where there was no poſſible means of eſcape—I knew not in what part of Italy I was; the people I had ſeen, ſpoke, I thought, a language unlike the Italian I had learned, and I gueſſed from the manner of the woman, when I addreſſed myſelf to her, that ſhe underſtood me with difficulty. I was entirely in the power of the perſon, whoever it was, to whom this caſtle or feudal reſidence belonged, and probably the whole country round was inhabited by vaſſals and dependents who dared not aſſiſt me, even if I had poſſeſſed the means of ſpeaking to or bribing them.

" It was impoſſible to aſſign any other cauſe for what had happened to me, than the rage and indignation of Signora Belcaſtro; and I now endeavoured to recollect, what I had heard you, my Montalbert, relate of your mother's property and

power

power in a part of Italy at a conſiderable diſtance from Naples, and of a ſuit at law ſhe had gained againſt your elder brother, which had confirmed her in the conſiderable eſtates he had diſputed with her.—Careleſs as to what related to property, which I conſidered only as a barrier to our happineſs, I had given leſs attention to this detail than to almoſt any thing elſe, relative to your mother, on which we had ever converſed; but now endeavouring to recal that converſation to my mind, I thought it certain that I was her priſoner in one of thoſe baronial houſes that belonged to her; and as ſhe might have condemned me, defenceleſs as I was, to a convent, or even to a dungeon, I felt ſomething like gratitude towards her, for not having treated me ſo cruelly as ſhe might have done.

"The very circumſtance of her confining me at all counteracted part of the uneaſineſs it inflicted; for I reflected, that had not my Montalbert lived, and

ſtill remained attached to his Roſalie, it could never have been an object to his mother to baniſh me thus from every place where he was likely to inquire for me. It would have been eaſier for her, and more inimical to the pretenſions which offended her, to have ſent me and my ſon to England, where, in the obſcurity of poverty, perhaps of diſgrace, (for you will obſerve that in my letter I have related the manner of our marriage), I ſhould have been too much depreſſed ever to have troubled her more either with my child's claims or my own. But in England Montalbert might have ſought me, and I was perſuaded that it was her fear of that, which had ſhut me up in a fortreſs on a diſtant part of the Italian ſhore.

"There was, however, ſomething ſoothing to my imagination in the ſight of the ſea, the only medium by which I could reach my native land, for thither my wiſhes were directed; thither I believed Montalbert was gone in ſearch of his Roſalie;

ſalie; and there, in my preſent diſpoſition to ſanguine hope, I flattered myſelf with believing we ſhould meet again.

" The woman I had ſeen the evening before came into my room, and brought me dried fruit and biſcuits for my breakfaſt; but ſhe ſeemed to keep her reſolution of being inexorably ſilent, and when I aſked her to inform me what liberty would be granted me, ſhe anſwered drily, that I might walk about the houſe. I then ventured to inquire where I was?—in what part of the country?

" The woman, fixing on me a look where pity ſeemed ſtifled by contempt and prejudice, anſwered, that I was in Calabria, and that, if my confinement had the happy effect of leading me from the heretical and bad opinions I had been brought up in, I ought to thank the bleſſed Saints who had permitted my eſcape from perdition. I cannot do juſtice to the ſtrength of her language, for it was a dialect quite unlike common Italian; but the countenance and manner of the

woman it would be ſtill more difficult to paint. I received her admonition with an appearance of ſubmiſſion, and aſked her if ſhe belonged to a religious ſociety?—She replied, that ſhe was not a nun. This gave me no ſatisfaction; I wiſhed to aſk, to whom ſhe belonged, if ſhe was a domeſtic of the houſe?—and this queſtion I endeavoured to make in the way leaſt likely to alarm her integrity; but my art was all thrown away; neither then nor at any other time could I prevail on her to tell me whom ſhe ſerved, or by what proſpect of advantage ſhe was engaged to live a life more ſolitary than that of a convent. She was, in appearance and manners, a little, and but a little, ſuperior to the peaſantry of the domain whom I have ſince had occaſion to ſee.

"I now took my little Harry in my arms, and began to ſurvey my great and melancholy dwelling. I wandered from room to room—they appeared leſs gloomy, yet larger, than when I had ſeen them before;

fore; that next to mine ſeemed to have been uſed as an oratory, but, except a marble table, ſerving for an altar, and ſeveral ſeats covered with flowered velvet, of great antiquity, it was as deſtitute of furniture as the reſt. Some, indeed, were quite empty, and others even without windows, in place of which pieces of board were nailed up, which rendered the apartments entirely dark. There ſeemed no end of theſe great gloomy rooms; the ſurvey of them was little calculated to encourage that cheerful train of thought which I had indulged in the morning. As I looked over the baluſtrades into the great hall, or caſt my eyes along the extenſive range of rooms and galleries, not even the brilliant light of an Italian ſky could drive from my mind the idea of their being viſited by nocturnal ſpectres.

" The remembrance of what my conductor had told me, that I could never eſcape, ſtruck cold upon my heart. The lone and iſolated ſituation of this mournful

ful ſolitude ſeemed to confirm it but too ſtrongly. I liſtened at a window to the ſounds around the houſe, by which I thought I could judge whether there were many inhabitants; but I heard only the notes of birds, who were now in the ſeaſon of ſong..... No human voice was heard—no noiſe of mechanics, or labourers, about the offices; and towards evening, as the variety of birds without ceaſed their chorus, a ſilence ſo ſolemn pervaded the place, that I felt my terror return, as if my child and I were the only living creatures in this vaſt edifice.

"My ſilent keeper, however, regularly returned with food; and as I thought, on the ſecond day, that ſhe regarded me with leſs aſperity, I again attempted to enter into converſation with her.

"I began by expreſſing my concern for the trouble I gave her, and aſked, if ſhe alone executed all the buſineſs of this large houſe?—She replied, that ſhe had help when ſhe wanted it.

"Alas!

'Alas! (then ſaid I), how much happier you are than I am!—I ſhould be content, methinks, if I had one female companion to ſpeak to....Indeed I ſhould be very much obliged to you, if you would now and then ſit with me—it is extremely dreary never to hear the ſound of a human voice.'

'Ahime, Signora! (replied the woman, who was called Cattina)—Ahime! you complain of want of company already!—and *I*, Signora, pray to the bleſſed Lady that we may not ſee at the caſtle any other perſons than are here now, at leaſt while I am its inhabitant; but perhaps, Signora, you might not hold in abhorrence ſuch viſitors as have been here in former times, and not ſo long ago, that is, not ſo very long ago neither.'

"I aſked what viſitors ſhe could mean in a place like this, which ſeemed to me to be the very extremity of Europe.

'Yes, (replied ſhe), it is a long long way off, to be ſure, from any great town; but the viſitors I mean are not Chriſtians,

as

as we are, of this country, but Pagans and Heretics like the wicked Engliſh. This caſtle has been plundered by the Algerines three or four times, and that is the reaſon that my----------(ſhe ſuddenly recollected herſelf, pauſed, and then went on)—that the owners of it never have reſided here for I don't know how many years; and nothing is now ever left in the houſe of any value.'

"My very ſoul failed within me as I heard this.—'O merciful Heaven! (exclaimed I), and theſe Algerines yet come occaſionally to this coaſt!—and you think it not impoſſible but that they may return hither?——Tell me, Madam, I entreat you, how long it is ſince they were here?'

'Three or four years, perhaps, (anſwered Cattina, reſuming her uſual cold manner). I don't know, however, exactly as to that; perhaps they may not land on the coaſt again, or not juſt here, for they know there is nothing of value for them to take: but then, indeed, we have

have no defence; formerly there was a guard kept at the caſtle, and thoſe guns that you ſee there below were kept loaded to drive away the infidels, but all that is laid aſide now. For my part I am not much afraid.'

" I now doubted whether Cattina had not told me this, to add to my puniſhment by all the aggravation of imaginary terrors. I had hardly courage to inquire farther; yet I ventured to make her ſome farther queſtions, and ſhe took me to a window on the ſouthern ſide of the houſe, where ſhe ſhewed me evident marks of the depredations made by the Barbarians, who had, ſhe ſaid, about five and twenty years before landed to the number of fifty, and killed all the men who were then in the houſe, carrying off the women and children, not only from the caſtle, but the villages around it.—' And who (ſaid I), then reſided in the caſtle?—Were the owners themſelves among thoſe who ſuffered?'

" Cattina looked as if ſhe would ſay—' And do you really think yourſelf cunning enough

enough to engage me, by theſe queſtions, to betray my truſt?'—She then, affecting not perfectly to underſtand my queſtion, for we had already been once or twice puzzled in our dialogue, left me to brood alone over the additional dread ſhe had impreſſed upon me. I went to the window and looked upon the ſea, which I had formerly gazed at with ſo much pleaſure: now, as the laſt rays of the ſetting ſun illuminated its waves with glowing light, I fancied that they might guide ſome inhuman pirates towards theſe lonely and defenceleſs walls, and that the vengeance of your mother, your cruel mother, had looked forward with malignant ſatisfaction to ſuch a cataſtrophe, and had devoted me and my child to ſlavery—a fate infinitely worſe than death.

"O Montalbert! what a night I paſſed after this diſcovery!—I forgot my real terrors only to be aſſaulted by all that fancy could collect: yet, I heard you, I ſaw you in my dreams, but it was contending with theſe lawleſs plunderers of

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the ſea, for the ſafety of your wife and your boy..... I ſaw you ſtruggling with numbers; I ſhrieked, awoke, and liſtened in breathleſs terror to hear if this fearful viſion was not realiſed, though you, Montalbert, I knew were not there. All, however, was ſtill around me, and I heard only the ſoft breathing of my child as he lay ſleeping on my arm, while my tears fell on his cheek. Thus paſſed the firſt eight and forty hours of my abode here."

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.